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TRAMPING THROUGH IRELAND

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TRAMPING TO LOURDES

TRAMPING THROUGH IRELAND

BY

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TO WHOM THE GENESIS

OF THIS BOOK IS DUE

TRAMPING THROUGH IRELAND

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CHAPTER ONE

AS the chattering crowd of faces, white under the electrics of the landing-stage, slipped sharply away from below and the *Lady Munster* slowly slid into the cool darkness of mid-river, it suddenly came to me with quite a little shiver how uncommonly nervous of the crossing I really was.

Any one of course can go to Ireland, and for the matter of that it seemed that thousands had chosen to go on this particular night and on this particular boat. But by no means everybody in the middle forties goes there on his very first—and maybe last—chance for a great London Daily and with no instructions at all beyond the immediate need of finding something to say likely to interest his couple of millions or so of unknown judges. Why on earth for a really fair first chance could they not have made it somewhere foreign where something happens, instead of Ireland of all places, a sort of second-rate suburb of England!

It was not as if I had a dog's chance even at

descriptive scenery, for a famous writer had just done all that. I had seen it in the paper before I had ever dreamed that I might be more than a reader. I had thought all that out in the train down from Euston: how somehow I simply must find a fresh angle. And now it looked as though my new angle had buckled badly at the very start. Steerage I had thought I might try, and then jammed for about an hour in a press shepherded by the Liverpool police I had weakened. For when at last they did let my special wave crush up the gangway and surge through to the third-class deck there had been scarcely room to stand, let alone sit down, and as for any story beyond the extreme discomfort of the business there was literally nothing to say. And so with enormous trouble I had fought my way to a barrier and persuaded some official to let me pay an excess and at least get breathing room, even if it was too late for a berth. And still there seemed nothing special to write about. Here up on the top deck, with the wind beginning to whistle cold as the engines throbbed themselves into speed, it all felt a little forlorn.

Down in the smoking-room it was at least warm, and the sight of the groups forming gave me something of an inspiration. What is it that Special Correspondents always do? They track down, of course, and if necessary purchase special inside

information, and as soon as I could get near the bar I had, by the exercise of man's oldest diplomacy, secured a miniature group of my very own. It was Ireland then that I was wanting to know something about, he said, and indeed I could have come to no better authority. He was himself, it seemed, an Irish gentleman. And as I waited expectantly for the return on my eightpennyworth of diplomatic investment, he came out with a brutally filthy remark about priests and pigs, the only products he said that the country in its present condition was any good for. He did not say it at all as if he was telling a mere indecent story, but threw into his tone such a genuine malignancy of absolute hate as never before had I ever heard. Inwardly I was enormously interested in the man, but as none of his views, social, theological, or political, could by any chance ever have been printed, there seemed little use in pursuing the inquiry further with more eightpences. And so presently finding a sofa arrangement I settled down and in default of sleep began like Sir John Moore (I fancy it was) bitterly to think of the morrow. How on earth, I kept wondering, do real Correspondents find things to write about!

The next forty-eight hours or so passed in a perfect nightmare of anxiety. Anything less inspiring than the bit of Dublin near the North

Wall Quay, as viewed about eight o'clock on a Sunday morning, I had never seen. 'A Faded Capital', that was what all the guide-books that I had hurriedly read had called it. And 'Dear Dirty Dublin' was another stock term. But I saw nothing specially dirty about it. In fact, the streets were cleaner swept than they would have been at home, and with no obscene ghouls raking through the dustbins. Only the place was empty. There was hardly a soul astir. A perfectly enormous policeman, of whom I asked the address of a cheap hotel, seemed the only human relief in sight. Even an hour later the people were only just coming out. And all through Ireland I found the same thing. Week-day and Sunday alike, town and village will be an hour or later than their opposite numbers in England.

All through that dreadful day I chased the interest that was not there. Dublin itself I looked at, and I think that blindfolded I should somehow have felt it a capital city. But the trouble was that it was too much like England. Bray and Blackrock and the place that I still call Kingstown, I went round them all. Half Dublin camps out there. With a sea that stretches round about three sides of the city, every bit of beach has its tents and week-end hutments. Only it is not commercialized like it would be at home. No organized amusements and no licences and ground-

rents. Just find a handy bit of cliff, run up some sort of shack, and then loaf about in flannels summer evenings and over the week-ends. You can see the family parties coming out by the thousand. I do not think I ever saw a town with so many small cars and so few big ones. Bits of interest of course you kept running into. Green pillar-boxes and notices in Gaelic. And then you begin to collect Irish coins with funny rabbits and hens and things on them. And of course the notes are different, mostly with their portrait of a very beautiful lady. Half Ireland tells you that it is Lady Lavery, and the other half swears that it is copied from the original Colleen on the Ballymaclinton soap advertisement at London's White City of years ago. I never found out which reading was correct.

And then (as I suppose a real Correspondent keen on his job would presently discover) the licensing laws are all different. You cannot get a drink before two or after five on a Sunday. Though indeed they have still kept the elusive and mysterious personage of the dear old Bonâ Fide Traveller, so that any gentleman with the whim to take a short tram journey before telling a lie is enabled with all honour and dignity to save himself from dying of thirst. That Correspondent's mentality, too, would presumably have noted down in his book that skirts on the whole

were longer in Dublin, and that to one girl in London with long hair there would be a score across the Channel. Trifles like that kept cropping up in plenty. Here and there would be a religious statue, and people in buses and trams would salute a church door, the men taking off their hats and the women crossing themselves. But so far I had not found the real Ireland. This might have been any great city at home, plus an indefinable air of being somehow a capital that, moreover, in some mysterious way had turned Catholic. Green pillar-boxes, Gaelic notices, even pipers in the Irish kilt, they all failed to give me that foreign feeling. I was disappointed.

The stock sights of the city I did not of course trouble with. For they must have been all written up hundreds of times before. There are two Protestant cathedrals, for instance, both with pages about them in the guide-book, and I saw neither. One of them—I forget which—was going soon to be bought by the Catholics, so some one told me. But I do not know whether it was true or not. It was the same casual acquaintance who informed me that the authorities were thinking of moving the 'Clucking Hen'. And then remembering with a jerk that it was rude to speak like that to an Englishman, he amended the phrase by explaining that it was a vulgar catchword for a local statue of Queen Victoria. I suppose, after

all, that it *was* the really proper thing to explain it.

Towards evening I found a man with a suggestion to correct my complaint of lack of incident. Had I seen, he inquired, the Dublin slums, famous as being about the worst and most dangerous in Europe? I had not, but now I remembered that I had heard of them, and I certainly should like to see them. So off we went, and the first thing that struck me was that from my point of view they were not dangerous at all. No winding courts and twisted alleys here, no rat-hole passages from which an underworld could suddenly stream out to terrorize a city. They were not like that at all. Streets wider than most main thoroughfares in London, and dead straight, all laid out at right angles. Half a dozen machine-guns, I imagine, could easily have commanded the whole quarter that they showed me. But it was the houses, five and six stories high, with magnificent entrance halls and great big high-ceilinged rooms! They had been the aristocratic part of Dublin a century and a half or so ago, in the days that the guide-book talks about. Only since, through all the years they had been getting worse and worse, and families were living in one room, and letting lodgings at that.

I went into some of the places. It is like going into a cavern. And then round you in the pitch

dark you can hear voices as the tenants, sitting on the broken, stinking stairs or squatting in their respective doorways, discuss the visitors from another world. I went into some of the rooms. One of them, I remember, was full of girls. God knows what they did or how they lived, but I do not think it would be the same as it would in London. Through the miasma of unclean clothes and scraps of linen drying from strings one could see the glow of a broken red lamp. There was a picture of the Sacred Heart behind it. Then they asked me if I would like to go to another house, and to the top of it this time.

Up flight after flight of broken stairway you go, stumbling across the unlighted landings, with an occasional gap in the splendid balustrade yawning straight down on to the abyss below. And there in the very top room of all they introduced me to an old man in his shirt for lack of pyjamas. I think I describe him badly, for with all the dirt and all the dreadful poverty and ignorance I am not at all certain that 'man' is the term well chosen. In some extraordinary way inconceivable at home he was a gentleman. With a courtesy that in that awful place seemed somehow almost a nightmare, he ushered me into his frightful room, and there, on the introduction of the man who had brought me, he began to talk to the stranger. In its way the visit was quite a

little social event. An Englishman then, and he was delighted indeed to meet one of my countrymen. A Fenian he had been himself back in the old days, and some time in the late 'sixties (it must have been) he had gone out and shot at an Englishman. One could sense that he felt it a sort of bond between us. It all sounds so ridiculous, of course, and it would take a cleverer writer than myself even to begin to make it clear to you. If I could draw, now, it would be different. Only I should not draw the old gentleman as a sort of figure of fun with an unshaven chin and a 'begorra' trembling on his lips, the typical Irishman of the English comic papers, but as a grave and patriarchal figure: such a one as in his youth might have drawn the sword to serve his Lord of Hosts according to his conscience. The fires were dead now and the bitterness departed, and it might have been a Bismarck of extremest age friendlily chatting over the strategies of a Franco-Prussian War. That at least was the impression that I got. And all on the top floor of a Dublin slum. I belong, of course, to the race that he shot at—I do wish I knew whether he hit his man or not—but I could not help a mental raising of my hat to him.

From gaiety to gaiety we progressed, and they next asked if I had ever been inside a shebeen, or illicit drinking den, one of the most depraved

spectacles, it seems, that civilization has to offer. As a matter of fact, I had not seen one of them, but of course I had heard of them. That is, if they are the same things that we have at home and that we generally read of in the Sunday papers in connexion with marriages into the peerage or other intelligentsia. Anyway, it all sounded most awfully exciting. Here at last might be the adventure I was seeking.

It begins unromantically enough. You go down quite an ordinary poor road, wide and well lighted and with a policeman all unsuspicious at the corner. Then you ask in one little shop, the sort of place where they sell firewood and the kind of vegetables that are not particular about their company, and after your cicerone has whispered mysteriously they shake their heads. Apparently their daughter has already married into the intelligentsia or else they have made their fortunes. But they nod and point to another place, the same sort of firewood and Woodbines shop, and with a little shudder in you go, prepared for any devilment. You buy your Woodbines or what not, and talk long and low to the lady in charge. And on her reluctant consent you go up to the door at the back of the shop and knock in a particular way. There is a glimpse of a face at a peep-hole and then the thing swings back, and Life lies before you.

At first glance it rather resembles a quite

ordinary kitchen with half a dozen quite ordinary but obviously uneasy gentlemen sitting round on hard chairs in dead silence. And then the hidden Iniquity begins to dawn upon you. For a comfortably middle-aged lady is making the round of the circle with a jug and glasses. And as you get your glass the full Sin of the business bursts upon you. A shilling for that little lot of inferior stout, and then I will swear there was water in mine! In Dublin we may not get into the Sunday papers with the swell divorce cases and the bishops explaining why they do not believe in God, but we can make our few hundred per cent just as well as our luckier sisters in the West End.

Round and round in the silence goes the lady, and you get something of the impression of a handing round of hymn-books at a deacons' meeting for a new chapel organ, so eminently decorous is the whole business. Even the family cat cleaning its whiskers before the neatly polished grate seemed to share the general air of unctuous rectitude. Until in the end, as it happened, it was this very beast that unwittingly threw the Apple of Discord bang into the very middle of the Mirror of Contentment. For as, its toilet complete, it paced mincingly across the kitchen floor, heavy-footed Hebe, engrossed with her sordid shillings, trod upon its indignant tail. And as I jumped up to

stroke it, I collided on my mission of mercy with the gentlemanly door-keeper as the same humane thought simultaneously struck him too. There was a bump, and something fell from his open pocket. With a charming smile of apology he stooped to retrieve his knuckle-duster, an implement doubtless necessary in the profession but, like a dentist's drill, not lightly to be shown to the laity.

I left just after that, and I only trust that with my departure the place grew merrier. For never have I drunk inferior stout in an atmosphere more funereal.

As I got into bed that night I had the feeling of something accomplished, something done, even though the day on the whole had not been altogether as full of incident as I might have wished. Dublin had at least yielded something, and Ireland, the real Ireland, was yet to come.

It was the next morning that I got my first glimpse into the island as a foreign country. And I got it, of all places, in a perfectly unromantic and Monday-morningish office in a Dublin main street. What was it, then, that I was really after, the man was asking me? A lawyer, I think he was, or something like that. Anyway, something quite ordinary. And on the strength of an introduction I had brought he was quite willing to give up just a few minutes to try to help me. If only

he could find out what I really wanted. Killarney, Connemara, the Vale of something? No, not that sort of thing at all. Then, as he focused his ideas, he thought for a minute and asked me if I knew Lough Derg. It was, he said, the most Irish thing in all Ireland.

No, not that big Lough Derg there on my map, but a little Lough Derg up in Donegal: so small, perhaps, that the stranger would not easily pick it out, and yet in its way so large that from America, from Australia, from everywhere where Irish were, every soul with Irish blood in his veins was looking towards it. St. Patrick's Purgatory it really was, with a cave in a tiny islet in a tiny lake where Ireland's Saint once prayed. And for centuries upon centuries pilgrims have been going there with never a break in the stream.

Properly of course one ought to tramp there, and barefoot if possible, the better to reach the holy shrine in holy penitence. And in the old days of course they always did. Even now there were plenty did it. A gentleman in the next block of offices, for instance. And if I liked we might go to lunch with him. But it was of course the exception to-day. Most people just did their pilgrimage by train. You would go of course in silence, only asking the most necessary questions about junction changes and the like. And you would be of course fasting. Not like what the

English call fasting, with three hearty meals a day of the fatter sort of fishes, but really literally fasting. And when you got there you would take off your boots and socks and you would spend your bit of time there mostly in vigil. And so you would come back by train in silence.

It was of course a pampered way of doing the thing, but in these luxurious times it was unfortunately general. Twelve or fourteen thousand would make the pilgrimage every year, and they would mostly do it that way. And Mr. Business Man host, picking up his pen again, owned with a sort of shame that he himself went by train. And I nearly fell out of my chair.

It was not as if the man had been a priest or a lay brother or anything particular: just an ordinary middle-class man sitting in an ordinary office and obviously waiting till I went to get on with his ordinary business. And here he was, in a city as Christian as my own London, with electric trams and telephones and things, practically admitting that he believed in God. It struck me as about the most astonishing thing that I had ever heard. It was my first glimpse into a foreign Ireland.

Would I like to go to Lough Derg now, he asked? Well, as it happens, I am a Catholic, though I do not see what on earth it has to do with Fleet Street or writing up Ireland, or, in fact,

anything at all connected with business. But even so, I did not think that I had the courage for the tremendous and awful vows that St. Patrick demands of his pilgrims. But certainly I would like to see the place, if only to look on. Then the train, he said, would be so-and-so, only I must clearly understand that unless I went as a pilgrim I could get no further than the shore of the lough. To the islet itself there was only one way—by boat. And the only boats belonged to the island's Prior. Not all the money in Fleet Street could find access for any save a penitent. Go if I liked and stop on the shore, or wait a week or so till the year's pilgrimage season was over, and then apply for permission to visit the islet frankly as a sight-seer. But now it would be as a pilgrim or nothing.

If, then, I preferred to wait my time, where now? Dublin, he said, was a poor sort of place to start to see Ireland from. Why not try Athlone, in the very centre of the country? Go there, turn round in effect three times, and see what happens. It would at least be a beginning. And by the very next train I was off, all agog for adventure to come.

From a railway journey one cannot of course expect very much, but even so there did seem trifling differences in atmosphere A bit on the Continental side, if you see what I mean. An enormous station, empty but for one train; and

they had that standing there hours before it was ready to start. So that as bit by bit it filled up, the thing was packed almost to overcrowding by the time that it steamed off. And then for hour after hour the thing gradually shed its passengers, and, as nobody else got in, by the time that we reached Athlone I was practically alone. And as I walked out of the station and down to the town, my tramping pack (ex-Army, 2*s.* 11*d.* in the Euston Road) solemnly preceding me in an ass-cart all to itself, the silence of the place after London and Dublin fairly hit me on the head. The foreign country feeling was growing.

And the very next morning I started off to search for the Real Thing.

CHAPTER TWO

AS walking westwards one slowly crosses the great central plain of Ireland one experiences at first a sense of absolute loneliness. When I started it was raining. Not hard like it does at home, but with a soft, gentle downpour that before many minutes had sodden even through the straps of the pack on my back. The road was good enough for anything: very nearly as good it was as our best in England; and with next to no traffic on it, one could safely take its very centre. But it was the desolation that worried me. Hour after hour and one would pass perhaps one ass-cart with a load of turf. Far to the south and west one could see through the rain the hazy outlines of some mountains, but for miles round my road the monotone of the mist stretched almost unbroken.

There did not seem to be even fields in our sense, and next to none of the cheerful red brick of the English farm-house. Every few miles a grazier's lime-washed cottage would loom up in the distance, and that was all. Even the miniature hillocks of turf, stacked brick fashion as it had been cut from the bog, took on almost the aspect of mountains in that desert of rainy loneliness.

'The Emerald Isle' they call it! It was the greyest world that the mind could conceive. You cannot miss the way of course, but it is about the only blessing. The roads are sign-posted even better than in England, but there are no milestones. And you can reckon your walking in terms of hours. And the next day will be just about the same as the first.

Then gradually, as you get used to it, you will begin to see things. You are not of course in the Gaeltacht, where they really speak Gaelic; but even the English does not mean quite the same as it does at home. The chemist's shop somehow becomes a 'Medical Hall', and a 'Victualler' means a butcher. On the other hand, a public-house is generally a 'grocery', and it was with a little thrill of pleasure that I first heard of a 'Grocer's Curate' as the most delightful of euphonisms for a bartender. What on earth a barmaid would be I do not know. But then they generally do not have any. Even the writing is changing a little. It is generally in Gaelic with the English underneath, but as often as not a shop-sign will have its Roman characters in as near the shorthand-like curves of the Celtic as may be. You can see how the change is coming. Shops to English notions are oddly unspecialized, with a few shirts and perhaps a toy hurley-stick all mixed up with a row of devotional books. Once I saw

a sign that advertised its owner as 'Grocery, Greengrocery, and Fruiterer, Wine and Spirit Merchant, and Funerals Provided', and once I saw a rosary which might have cost fourpence hanging up forlornly as second-hand. And wherever the shop could possibly manage it every mortal thing would be advertised as 'Irish', from gramophone records to maps. The Free State must, one imagines, be the world's most economically-patriotic country. Some one told me how they admired the Prince of Wales as a true Sinn Féiner. 'Buy British', it comes in all his speeches. Only of course we don't. But these Irish people *were* buying Irish. 'Burn everything English that comes into Ireland, except the coal.' That used to be the old cry. Now it is no longer needed. For they do buy Irish.

So one by one, and ever so slowly, the little towns began to succeed one another: Ballinasloe, Kilcullogh, Athenry, Oranmore, and the rest. And it was not a little bit like I had expected. According to guide-books I had read they should have been dirty, squalid places, with ragged children playing on the filthy stones outside each tumble-down cabin door. There ought to have been hordes of beggars pursuing the Saxon stranger with whining lies. But it was all wrong. I think my guide-books must have been old-fashioned. Really, when you come to a place

like, say, Ballinasloe you find a wide street of houses at least as solid as any in my own London suburban road, pavements swept perfectly clean, very few people visible at all and certainly no beggars, and a general atmosphere of virtuous respectability that strikes one as almost oppressive. After, in fact, a very long day's hard walking in the rain, it will presently dawn upon the Saxon stranger that if there is any one thoroughly dirty in the town it is himself. The guide-book, I think, must have forgotten to correct a legend a century or so out of date.

So the townlets passed, and by and by as I grew, so to speak, more into tune with the place, each one began to provide its incident or so. It was in Athenry, I think, that I saw my first Feast. It is a tiny town with some simply enormous ruins, a castle and an abbey and bits of some city walls. There was a battle there that I never heard of, but a man who shaved me in a little shop knew all about it, dates and all. And in the very middle of the place stand the remains of a medieval stone Calvary. You leave it behind you, and bearing straight on pass on the right where the boys were playing fives against the huge derelict chancel of the abbey. And a wonderful fives court it must have made. Then you pass a stone where some one has cut in letters meant to outlast the ages his imperishable convictions of 'Up Duffy', and a

hundred yards farther on you can begin to see the thing.

There was a ridge in the distance, and outlined on it against the skyline I could see an endless procession. Not all together, but in ones and twos and threes, all making unhurriedly for the same goal. Then as I got nearer still I could see other columns radiating from other points of the compass, with here and there a jaunting-car picking its slow way over the field roads, or even a motor bumping painfully over the stones and ruts. Closer still and I was actually amongst the people. Quite ordinary folk they were—little family parties, couples, mothers with babies, single young men, and all with the same set look of cheerful solemnity. And most of them as they passed each other would exchange a word of low-voiced greeting. Even for the stranger there was a salutation. From the men, that is. For the women would look gravely down upon the road. And I noticed the same thing all through Ireland.

So in another minute or so I was at the place itself—a little hollow with three or four trees in the swampy ground beside a stream, and in the centre one tree growing from a pool. And this was the Holy Well itself, the very life and being of the whole Feast. Now, whether or not there ever was an Apparition here is officially unsettled. This was no Lourdes, and the Church had made no

pronouncement, but left it free to individual faith to believe or not to believe. Only for miles round they did believe. And for miles round scores of other Holy Wells up and down all Ireland they were believing too. Only this was the first that I had ever seen.

Around were the jaunting-cars, their horses freed from the shafts and taking their ease with a forkful of hay. There were half a dozen two-seaters and a good many glittering cycles with flannelled young men who at home would have been playing tennis. There were girls in frocks as smart as any in London, and with them old women in long, heavy, green skirts and huge enveloping shawls and no hats. There was a booth or two with lemonade and cakes and jujubes for the children and a Free State policeman (only they call them 'Guards') looking on, and a woman with a basket selling rosaries and little medals. As she took my coppers she wished me a good Station and profitable to my soul. It was all most peculiar.

The whole general atmosphere, indeed, was extraordinary. There was neither the awed piety that at home we keep for in church, nor the flippancy that goes with out of church. These people were somehow just gravely cheerful. All of them had either just done something or else were just going to do it. Girls to one side, men to the other, they were taking off or putting on

boots and stockings, and as each was ready without giggling or self-consciousness they found a place in the line of people perpetually encircling the well. I did not go myself. I simply did not dare. This is Ireland and I am a foreigner here. This is not an international Lourdes, and the people would only see an impertinent tourist playing at the thing as he intruded upon their devotions. And I can think of heaps more reasons like that. And at the very end, if you really want to know, I did not go because I did not think myself good enough to go with those people.

What I did do was to peep shamefacedly for a moment within the circle round the well. There was a low wall of whitewashed stones, broken only at one point. It was there that you could see the Well itself. There was not very much to see. A shabby little picture of Our Lady, a rough shelf with some vases of the jam-jar variety filled with flowers (fresh flowers), and half a dozen rosaries and trifles hung in the tree above the pool as thank-offerings for favours granted or prayed for. And that was all. Only round and round the people were going with their prayers, barefooted on the pebbly track. Some indeed were doing it on their bare knees. Fifteen times it was that they went round. Some of them were in little family parties. There was one plus-foured, estate-agent-looking father encouraging two small sons

to keep it up. I watched them as they drove away afterwards in the two-seater, the man and his smiling wife in front and the two peculiarly chirpy children in the dickey-seat behind. Most extraordinary it all was.

And the thing was that I had not meant to write about it at all. Back in Fleet Street they had warned me to keep well off politics and religion. They are both of course best left alone when talking about Ireland. And then I had done it. Only I do not see how to talk about Ireland without talking about religion. In a country where every drover on a country fair day will stop the harrying of his beasts to bless himself at the ringing of the bell for the Angelus, and where every man inside a bus will raise his hat as he passes a church door, it is a trifle difficult to ignore the subject. Once later on, I know, down in Waterford, I saw a street of people suddenly burst into a jog-trot. I have seen the same thing in our Rochdale back in the old times of mill-hours, and I have seen it in my own suburb in the days when we used to catch steam-trains, but never till I went to Ireland had I seen grown-ups running for fear of being late at church. As I say, it is a little hard in Ireland to write as though it were England.

In the evening after the Feast came what at home we should call the Fair. The lorries had been just arriving as I passed the field on my way

to the Well, and as I returned they were practically unloaded. So I stood and watched the men at their business. It all goes up miles faster than you ever think. First there is a sort of platform, and then they hoist up the steam-engine that works the roundabouts. Then there is the part that you stand on, and finally the scaffold at the top that the hobby-horses hang from. And of course a fearful lot of ladders standing about.

That was the first time that I noticed Terence. I know that was his name, because I heard his mother calling him by it. Terence, on the other hand, failed to hear her, which in the latter end was, as it proved, unfortunate for him. And why I noticed the child was because while all the other boys were simply scampering about delirious with the thrills to come Terence had provided his own thrill by securing a ladder all to himself and mounting to the top of the whole contraption. It is true that one of the fair men immediately lowered him down again, but a boy like that cannot be beaten. Not spiritually, at least.

The thing goes ever so fast, you know, and even while you stare a lorry that shows nothing but a patient row of wooden horses' noses miraculously unloads itself and the fiery steeds come to galloping life. There was a bit of bother, it is true, with one of the ostriches (I think it was an ostrich ; anyway it was green underneath). But then ostriches

are always awkward. It is their necks being hinged for travelling, only you do not notice the join when you are sitting on the things. But of course you have them if you want your show to be really an Unparalleled Representation of the Grand National. But even the ostrich was worked into his proper slot at last, and with every horse and every bird securely in his appointed place the steam-organ thing burst into the Hallelujah Chorus and the great electrics began to twirl, throwing monstrous flares and shadows into the foliage of the darkening trees. The fair had opened at last.

In all the maddened rush of children I looked out anxiously for Terence, and in a sneaking sort of way was glad to see that out of all Athenry (which means the 'City of Kings') he was the very first to capture a horse. Against this, on the other hand, I cannot think that once astride it was necessary to shout a lusty offer of 'Even money the field.' Not at five years old. And in any case his odds were all wrong, for, as it happened, his mother caught him up just then, beating him easily by a short head. You will understand of course that though I say 'head' it is only my literary way of describing the end of the business. And the end of Terence was about the last that I saw of Athenry. For early next morning I left on my road to Galway.

For years I had been rather wanting to see the place, for, oddly enough, I had once done a little work in hunting out the history of the Lynch story there. The city of course in the Middle Ages had been a sort of Liverpool, with tall ships trading to Spain. Even to-day they say that Spanish blood is to be found in Galway. And as a kind of Norman outpost against the Irish tribesmen it had had its laws and powers, and its mayors were invested with the high justice of life and death. A Lynch one of them had been—there were dozens of Lynch big-wigs in the old days of the city—and his son had murdered a young Spaniard in love with the wrong girl, and as mayor his father had sentenced him to death. And then the mob had threatened to break into the prison and rescue the lad. And at the very last minute, as the crowd hammered at the door, the father had appeared with his son at an upper window, and there making a truly Roman speech about justice coming before affection had fixed a rope round the boy's neck and thrown him down. And from this, they say, came 'Lynch Law'. It is true that two other derivations, far more plausible, have been offered as explanations for the phrase, but the Mayor Lynch business is the only one that counts in Galway. And years earlier some one had paid me to try to look the whole thing up. And now I was going actually to see the place.

In a way it is rather wonderful, and it is almost a pity that most people only know it as the gateway to the tourists' Connemara, the sort of place to stop one night in the big hotel and buy some souvenirs and so pass on. For there tucked away behind the main street still stands the old town. Its great houses have come down sadly in the world. I know because I went into one, and it was a sort of common lodging-house. But they must in their time have been rather marvellous houses. Days and days away from even Dublin the place was, and so it developed its own fashions and its own architecture. There is the shell of an old house-door with no house behind it that they have stuck up in a huge square in the middle of the town as a 'Memorial of Galway in its Days of Civic Opulence', and I thought that in its way it was one of the saddest and one of the finest things that I had ever seen. And I would like to take off my hat to the city council that put it there. For it was the very first town of which I had ever heard that had the pluck to own that its glories had departed.

The Lynch castle and the Lynch window and the Claddagh—that odd fishermen's village that for centuries is supposed to have kept its blood intact from the town proper—every tourist sees them, just as every tourist buys a Claddagh ring, that thing with the two clasped hands and the

heart. But I do not think that it is every tourist who realizes that Galway had a second tragedy. It was in the 'eighties of last century and the Middle Ages were over and done with. But Galway was coming again. It was the nearest point of Europe to the United States, and they were going to run steamers from there, and Liverpool was going to take a second place. And in way of preparation for the prosperity that was coming there was a simply colossal square and hotels 'Imperial' and 'Royal' and 'American' all round it. (You will find all over Ireland that with the coming of the Free State they have simply forgotten to alter the hotel names!) There is a station that seems to rival Euston. And when I saw it, there was one old lady in it, trying to say her prayers and sell cockles at the same time. (Which you or I would find extremely difficult.) For the prosperity never came. There was a great ship that got wrecked in the harbour, and the monied people got frightened and so Liverpool kept her trade. I met a very old man who wanted to tell me all about it: how there was bribery and foul play and spies and people in the employ of the great English shipping interests. And how somebody tampered with a compass, and so the ship was lost, and the money frightened away from Galway. And I told him that I did not believe one single word of it all, though he was very welcome indeed to another Guinness. But

however it all happened, the fact remains that the great square in the middle of the city is too big for any prosperity that has come to it.

With all the pains they had taken in the Middle Ages to maintain the place as a Norman stronghold and to keep the tribesmen out, the Galway of to-day struck me as about the most Irish place I had so far seen. There used to be a sort of by-law to the effect that 'No O' ne Mac shall strut ne swagger through the streets', and to-day they were running motor-buses with Gaelic lettering that I could not read. And if that is not strutting and swaggering I do not know what is. One of the city gates used to be inscribed with a legend that it was erected to protect the city 'From the Fury of the O'Flaherties'. To-day the O'Flaherties have broken through and actually run the motor-buses. I rode on one, and got the impression that the firm employed drivers especially selected to keep up the honour of the ancient name.

And besides its Irishness it had something else as well. For even discounting the architecture of the old houses down the quay way and the attractions obviously maintained for the tourist, there was a vague something about the place, as though the faintest echo of something foreign remained to it after all these centuries. There was a funeral that I saw, and my mind instantly leapt back to Brussels, the only place where I had ever seen

anything in the least like it. There was a door I passed where somebody had died, and on it they had stuck a notice of precisely the style that once I had seen somewhere else abroad. And there were heaps of intangible trifles of the same sort, the vaguest hints that hidden away from hurried tourist eyes the city treasured up the faded fragrance of the foreign glories that had once been Galway's in the proud days when her merchantmen traded down to far Cadiz.

At least it was the most Catholic town that off the Continent I ever had seen. It is true that I myself in the day that I was there only visited the Cathedral, the Dominicans' church, and the Franciscans' church, impiously ignoring the Jesuits' church and the church of the Augustinians. But there were lots more clues besides its churches. Never at home have I seen a motor-car standing in the street with a rosary hanging carelessly from one of its lamps. And never at home have I seen a General Post Office with a rosary drooping from the lattice on the counter. Everybody carries one as a matter of course, and some one had dropped one. That was all. It was stuck up waiting for a claimant like a glove. And then if you go out to Salthill, which is Galway's sea-side suburb, the boarding-houses instead of being 'Sea View' and 'Beach House', like they would at home, are all named things like 'Lisieux' and 'St. Teresa' and such-like.

I could not see everything of course. I was, for instance, very doubtful as to whether I ought not to go to the Aran Islands. The men, you know, wear petticoats until they are in the early twenties or so, and sometimes you may see a fisherman in Galway wearing the hide boots that the islanders make themselves. There is a little steamer which runs out twice a week, and if she cannot get near enough into shore they drive the cattle into small boats and then hoist them up by slings. But I was not sure that it was worth waiting two days for. The thing must have been written up again and again. There had, they said, been a distinguished man of letters stopping out there doing it. They also told me that the distinguished man of letters had practically to take a season ticket on the boat to keep coming ashore, the primitive puritanism of the islanders being such that he was totally unable out there ever to get enough to drink.

The night that I was in Galway I treated myself to the pictures. There was a choice of two places, and I was rather exercised as to which to patronize. One was the regular movie theatre showing the 'Street Angel', and I wanted to see it. I had seen it in great houses in London half a dozen times, and though I know that it is all wrong and that it is banned in Naples itself, the very town it is supposed to represent, I had liked it. But what

I really wanted to see it again for was to discover how much the Irish censor had cut it. The Free State makes its own regulations, and I had heard that they were a great deal stricter than ours at home. About stockings and garters and things, I mean.

Then at the other place, which was not a regular theatre at all, they were advertising an 'All Irish Film', and in the end I decided to go to it. There was a gentleman who had come all the way from New York to show us the film, and he explained it all in rather a long lecture. Certain influences, he said, were at work in America to produce films always showing Ireland and the Irish in a ludicrous and degraded light, and this picture was intended as a counterblast. Pretty serious it sounded to me, and he left very little doubt indeed as to what 'influences' he meant either. I had not known that England controlled the American films, but, anyway, it seemed a disgraceful use to put them to, and I was glad that it was going to be stopped. The American gentleman had quite a lot to say about it all and the unfairness of the thing, though I had to notice that his sense of international delicacy did not prevent him from making a good many rather rude jokes about England and England's war and England's army and England's king. In fact, had it not been that I was there, so to speak, professionally, I should have got up

and walked out. Or, to be absolutely accurate, I should probably have got up and said something and been thrown out. As it was, I went on listening to a speech which took up about a quarter of the evening. It was odd, because all the hundreds of miles that I went through Ireland I never once heard a genuine Irishman say anything to which an Englishman could be forced to take exception. I rather got the impression that they were much too well-mannered to say everything they thought.

As to the film itself, this gentleman told us that it was one of the hits of America and the sensation of the entire United States Press. So of course it must have been. What I can swear to is that it would infallibly have emptied any English cinema within five minutes ; for the entire audience would in sheer boredom have walked out, demanding its money back. There was no ' sex appeal ' and in fact no sex. There were no people in the picture and no story. It was simply one of those scenery things that at home they throw on for three minutes while they are changing the atmosphere and the audience. Here they threw it on for more like three hours, and the audience did not change.

So we were shown Killarney, and the piano tinkled out the obvious tune. And Limerick, and it was the same. And Cork, Queenstown, Kerry, every town and every view in Ireland. As the film rattled through (with breaks) the pianist gave

the appropriate music wherever possible. And where there was no special local air we generally got the 'Wearing of the Green'. And never tired of it. To every single picture and every single tune, and even every single break, it was the same. We stamped and clapped and cheered ourselves tired and hoarse. And the place was packed out. In the two-and-fourpenny seats was barely room at all. And nobody left before the end.

It was not as though this was the remotest country where a cinema would be a novelty. There was the other house with real actors and actresses from Hollywood. And yet they preferred this thing. And the only possible explanation that I could think of as I walked home to my pub was that these Irish must love their Ireland very dearly.

CHAPTER THREE

FROM Galway, of course, if you go straight on you walk into the sea and get wet, so a turning of some sort is necessary. And which way to go presented rather a problem. I had no instructions of any sort, and no limitations of expenses. It was as yet far from the time when my stuff began to break into print, and I received my first abusive letter—fair sign of success. (The gentleman, by the way, was angry because I had not mentioned the Duke of Wellington as being born in Ireland. But I should not have mentioned it in any case, because it would have been a lie. The Duke, I think, was born on a packet-boat going to Ireland, and so was probably an English national.) On the other hand, the paper had not yet wired me to come back, so I was presumably still on trial.

To the left, the Connemara country looked far the most interesting, with enormous peaks towering up in the distance. I had been a bit out that way as it was, in a bus that ran to Spiddal, and I had seen the tiny little fields, many no bigger than a London back garden, and the men, women, and children trying to wrest ever so little of a living from a soil that was all but barren rock. Why on earth, now that Ireland is her own master, they

cannot move the population from the place where there obviously is not a living and plant it down on the deserted fertility through which I had tramped across the central plain, I do not know. But possibly the people will not be moved, preferring almost to starve on the pathetic bits of fields where their forefathers had been born. Forty years in a London suburb hardly teaches farming, but even my eyes could see the tragedy of those Connemara fields, with their two inches of soil on the top of tons of savage rock. And even then as often as not the two inches had had to be carried there in sacks. Seaweed I had heard of the people living on in winter, and still the country was almost populous. In an hour you would meet more people than you would see in a day's tramp from Athlone to Ballinasloe. Connemara seemed to present its points of interest.

Against this, the place must have been written up time and again. It was, besides, the tourist country, and I did not want to look at a lot of my own countrymen holiday-making in plus-fours. So regretfully I turned half-right, up through Headford and Ballinrobe on the Westport road. I walked at first. It was gloriously fine (it does not always rain in Ireland !) and there was a spring in the soft air that made walking a delight. The heather on the bog seemed deeper purple than any I had ever seen, and the mountains over Lough

Corrib to the left, framed a picture of enchantment. But I met no people, and scenery would make no story for me. And so as the Irish Omnibus Company's great monster (but I was glad to see that it had an 'Albion' engine) roared past, I stopped it and climbed in.

Ballinrobe was the first place, only I made a mistake and put up at the wrong hotel. It was far too good for what I wanted. A sort of oasis tucked away in the desert, I suppose its business must have been the entertainment of the sportsmen there for the fishing on Lough Mask. They charged me little enough in all conscience, but it was not the atmosphere that I was after. The Lough and the Castle where Captain Boycott coined a new word for the language, those were the sort of sights I ought to have seen. And instead what I was interested in was the enormous ruined mill.

I was coming across them all through Ireland—relics of what they call 'The Troubles'. And always I met the same problem. How on earth did they manage to do so much damage with so few casualties? The thing at Ballinrobe must have been quite a job to blow up; but when I inquired as to how many had been killed the answer was, 'None at all.' Always I was being shown places where two, three, or ten people had been killed. And always I failed to register the proper horror. About eighteen thousand a day were

coming down from Passchendaele in the only war that I had been in, and this slaughter by split-dozens failed to impress me.

It was an Irishman who put the thing in proper perspective for me. My eighteen thousand a day business, he said, had been an impersonal affair. Just a gun-pit with a crew lying in bunks carved out of the mud, lousy, filthy, and fed up. And then a message on the field telephone orders that so many shots per hour be put over to point so-and-so, perhaps twenty miles away. And the shots are fired, and so many women over in an unknown Germany are made widows. And that is all about it. And the other people are doing the same thing. All impersonal. Such-and-such a great name in Whitehall or its opposite number in Berlin either piling up credit or making a mess of things, and just an impersonal table of impersonal casualty rolls.

Here in Ireland, he said, it was different. Only three people killed, but they would be three people that one knew. Little Michael O'Somebody who in his enthusiasm one way or the other had volunteered himself and his cheap cycle as 'dispatch rider', and when the opposition turned up and shot him and his father and his brother it outweighed somehow, he said, the more glorious thousands of this, that, or the other famous general.

I do not know. I have no views myself, and only set down the things that I heard. But half

the inns in Ireland that I stopped at had their stories of three armies. There would be the British, and then the Republicans, and then the Free Staters. And nearly always I heard with a little flush of vanity the praises of the British. Such gentlemen they were, I would hear, and then they would qualify it by adding, 'Poor creatures'. Somewhere they told me a tale of a column called out in the middle of the night, and in the hills which they did not understand the Republicans were just above them. 'And they could have shot them down, every man of them. Only they did not like to, you know. Because in the village they had been such gentlemen.' Whether it was true or not I do not know. But it detracted a bit from my pride of Imperialism.

Then there was the story that one innkeeper told me of a warrant officer of the British Army. He had been billeted there for months, and when the time came for him to leave he was worried about his wife and how to get her home. Second passage was the official way, but the woman was going to have a baby, and her husband wanted her to travel 'cabin'. And so his host lent him the extra bit of money. Three pounds he had. And the moment that he was back in London and could touch his pay he wired it through. A gentleman he was. And Mr. Innkeeper spoke as though he had been a friend. There was only one thing

worried him: the Englishman had not done his job. The Irish leader that he was sent to look for he had not found. And would it be that he would be getting into trouble over it? And I suggested that I did not think so. It was possible that the Irishman had been taken after all. And nothing said about it. There must have been many things which were known to our Secret Service which never got into dispatches. But, the publican went on, that could not be so here. 'The man never could have been caught. For I was the man. Only the poor English gentleman never knew it.' I did not like it very much, though of course I was glad he had sent the money back.

All my preconceptions were bit by bit coming pretty badly to pieces. Ireland, for instance, I had always regarded as a pre-eminently humorous country, with its people all dashing about and saying 'begorra' and bashing in each other's hats and otherwise behaving in a delightfully humorous manner. They do it in all the English novels. Only they were not doing it in Ireland. Or if they were they were keeping it very secret. Only once in several hundreds of miles did I see any one behaving in the very least like the stock Irishman of the English papers. And then he turned out to be an Englishman slightly intoxicated. So far not a soul had even wished me the 'Top of the morning'. From a man just a grave bow, and that

was all. Even the farm labourer sort of person did it. And from the women nothing. It was all very disappointing.

There was a place just past Ballinrobe called Partry where I heard an odd tale that seemed to throw quite a new sort of light upon Ireland. According to English notions it is not much of a place, just a few whitewashed cottages on the road that stretches towards the north, and the mountains getting nearer every mile. But with all its miserable insignificance the place gave itself airs which would hardly have been supportable in a world capital. Two great glories it had. Or at least it once had. That there was born a boy who lived to become a great and famous Cardinal in America. And for years, they said, even when he was old, he would leave his affairs of state to cross the Atlantic to visit his birthplace and to look at the graves of his Irish parents.

The other thing? They did not talk so much about that nowadays, but I did get somebody to tell me the story. How here was born another boy who grew up to be a fighter and to turn himself into a world's champion heavy-weight. And when his name was made and with gate-money and the like he was worth his thousands, he remembered his village and sent over the money (quite a lot of it) for the adornment of its parish church. Two great pillars for the porch they spent it on, and

one day the great man was coming over to look at them. The place was very proud. Then fell the blow. It is a little difficult to explain in English, but over in Ireland they do not have any Divorce Problem. It seems funny to us, of course, with no deans and bishops making money by writing for the papers about it, but for all that it is true. No 'problem' at all in Ireland. They just call it by a much shorter word and so leave it at that. And when the news came flashing over the cables from America that poor Jim Corbett, for all his six feet of bone and brawn, had fallen into Sin (which is the Irish word for the thing), they just pulled down his grand pillars, erased his name from them, and wrote and said that he need not trouble to come back after all. Now I for one see nothing so rollickingly humorous about that story of Irish life. And it was the same all the way through. These people were not 'funny' at all in our English sense. Rather a serious people, I thought them, and when they were being humorous it was not with our flippant perkiness at all. Who ever first started the 'begorra' and 'be jabers' stories must have had a peculiarly vivid imagination.

So mile by mile I worked up northwards to Castlebar (something once happened there, but I do not know what) and Westport. That I did know something about because it comes of course

in the charming 'Birmingham' books. I had read most of them and enjoyed them. But in Westport itself they were anything but unanimous on the subject. I myself heard at least two divergent points of view. 'Here is a gentleman,' one had it, 'who though by education he might have aspired to almost any place in his Church, yet was willing voluntarily to exile himself in a miserable little back-of-beyond town. And there by the cleverness of his pen he makes the town immortal. And then it is not grateful.' The other point of view was different. 'Here is a Protestant clergyman,' it said, 'who having by the nature of his job naturally next to nothing to do, choses to employ his leisure by making a lot of money in poking fun at his Catholic neighbours.' I hold no brief at all for either side, but there were the two standpoints. And it seemed the same about most things. In the middle of Westport, for instance, stands a sort of miniature Nelson column, only the figure at the top is knocked down. It tells you in an inscription about who it was. 'So-and-so, a benefactor to the town', and the monument erected in sorrowing gratitude. And so forth. But then I heard another side. 'He,' somebody told me, 'made a lot of money out of swindling the poor. And those that got the money, of course they put the pillar up. And then when the new times came, the Republican boys they tried

to pull the old devil down. And they nearly did it. And when the Free Staters came along they were not going to be beaten by the Republicans, so they finished the job off for them.' I know nothing about the long-deceased gentleman of Westport's pillar, but I can see that the job was 'finished off' all right. At least on that point there can be no two opinions.

It is an odd little town, with a quay a mile away facing on to a bay that is almost silted up. Full of islets it is, and somebody told me that there were three hundred and sixty-five of them. But I myself never saw so many. Cattle they graze on some of them, and the beasts will have to swim on and off. But it is for the mountain five miles away that the place is chiefly notable. The 'Reek' they call it locally, but it is really Croagh Patrick, and a very famous peak indeed. It was on its summit that St. Patrick fasted and prayed for forty days and nights, only coming down with a sort of holy charter for Ireland that he had wrested from God. And once a year they have an enormous pilgrimage with thousands and thousands climbing the thing. Three Atlantic liners in one week, they told me, had put in off Galway this year, and each disembarked its so many hundreds of Irish-Americans who had made the crossing on purpose to climb the Reek. Not that the mountain is ever deserted, for never a day will pass,

winter or summer, without at least some one making the pilgrimage. They will start from Westport at midnight, fasting, and walk the five miles to the mountain's foot, and then take their shoes and socks off and so climb the two thousand five hundred feet to its rocky summit on purpose to say the proper prayers.

I went myself, by the way, but not as any sort of pilgrim. Even as a well-fed tourist the thing was bad enough. There were four of us went, and I never knew quite who we all were, the party sprang up so quickly. One, I know, was the son or somebody of the sporting publican with whom I was stopping, a young gentleman with an intelligent interest in greyhound racing. And then there were two girls, and one had climbed the Reek three times this year and the other four, and an extra climb would do no harm. And almost before I had made up my mind that I really wanted to go at all, Mr. Innkeeper had somehow produced a car and packed us in, and off we were starting. I have read books where it talks of the Irish as a sort of perpetually putting off till to-morrow people, but I think that my books were wrong.

As we rattled along on the road to Croagh Patrick and Louisburgh (I suppose it has something to do with the French trying to land in 1798), the young gentleman talking about greyhounds and myself hung round with the innkeeper's racing

glasses, it came to me that we were doing the thing all wrong. Almost might we have been going to the 'Ally Pally' races. It was of course all right for me, a mere foreign tourist, but these people were far too off-hand about the business, considering that it was their own Ireland's holy mountain. And was the car for the four of us, I wondered uneasily, going to be charged to my bill?

For the first half mile or so I had an irritable sense that some one, perhaps the local district council, ought really to have done something in the way of mending the mountain-path, and then it dawned on me that there was no council and there was no path. The track, such as it was, all covered with huge boulders, was simply worn by the thousands of pilgrims who year by year make their way up the great grim, barren peak. Forty thousand they have had in one day before now on the pilgrimage of one notable year. But once past the white statue of St. Patrick and there was no pretence of path at all, and the mountain towering gauntly above looked as though nobody in the whole world had ever climbed its heights before.

Three-quarters of an hour or so I must have climbed before I met a single soul at all—an elderly and grossly stout woman laboriously and painfully descending. A stick in either hand, she had a rosary round her wrist, and as I passed she

prayed that God might bless my climb. It seemed hardly the opening for secular conversation, but I did venture to ask how long the business had taken her. Since ten that morning. And it was now nearly four !

A little later, and one has to climb in earnest. Take a waterfall and take the water out of it and fill up the course with huge, rough stones the size of a man's head. They slip under one's feet and twist one's ankles as one staggers up that Sinai of the West. And the track in places is almost perpendicular. But old men do it, and old women. And they do it barefoot and fasting and in the dark of earliest morning, stumbling and staggering away if only they may be in time for the priests at the summit and What the priests have to offer them. Only now of course with no pilgrimage there, we had the Reek to ourselves. And there would be no priests at the top. There would not be anybody or anything.

The greyhound young gentleman and one of the girls were out of sight now. Sweethearts, I guessed they might be, and impatient of a stranger. The other girl was waiting with me with something of the kindly tolerance of a nursemaid for a child who could not keep up. And if only for my English manhood I sweated and struggled over those stones until I thought my heart would burst. We came to a ' Station ', a rough cross in a rough

cairn. I would not wish, she supposed a little wistfully, to say the prayers? It would have to be barefoot, of course, so many times round the cairn. The others, now, they would have done it. Brother and sister they were, she told me as I halted for breath. It was her own first time up the Reek, she said, that she had missed doing it, but still with my sort of climbing we ought perhaps to be getting on if we were going to get there at all. And I struggled up again.

There was no view, and the glasses were needless weight after all, for by and by we plunged into a black fog of driving mist. I hoped that it was all right about St. Patrick having really exorcised the demons of the mountain, only as I sat I could swear that I heard uncanny whistlings up there in the darkness. The wind under the stones, I supposed. And now, wet through and chilled to the bone, I was stopping to rest every couple of minutes or so. As I panted, the girl, still with the same kindly tolerance of trying to cheer a tired and frightened child, began to tell me about where we were going. The little Oratory on the summit, now, the cement to build it was all packed in seven-pound bags. And every man that climbed the Reek would carry a bag. The gentleman, now, who had lent us the car, he had been up his score of times, and each time he had carried the little sack. Do prosperous sporting publicans in

England, I wondered, carry cement as they climb barefooted up to chapels on the tops of inaccessible mountains ?

And soon, another ' Station ' and cross passed, we came to the peak itself. And there in the tiny Oratory, so small that one marvelled that the gale howling over the few feet of plateau did not sweep it away, we found the greyhound young gentleman and his sister awaiting us on their knees.

Two hours later, as I was struggling down again, a trouser knee ripped open and one boot badly damaged, I caught sight far below of three tiny black specks crawling painfully upwards. As I turned Mr. Publican-Chapel-Builder's racing glasses on them I could pick them out. Three priests they were, and I wondered what time they would be down again. Midnight, at the very earliest, it seemed tc me, even if they were athletes. But when we passed them, toiling up remorselessly and grimly, I saw that one had snow-white hair. Not a word did they speak, but gravely bowed without a halt. Fasting, they might be, the others told me, and they would be spending the night up there in the chill and soaking rain.

For myself, I was glad that it was over, and I welcomed the white statue of St. Patrick with a sense of positive relief. There is an alms-box at his feet, a very big one, and I was just going to drop a coin inside. And then it struck me how

silly it was, when the thing could not be used again till the Pilgrimage of next July. Only as I carelessly shook it the weight surprised me.

For it was not empty at all. Nor now do I think that it ever would be.

CHAPTER FOUR

REAL writing, of course, I regarded as outside my job. There must be plenty of people who have written serious works about Ireland. And scenery I did not particularly want even to try. In point of fact, I was deliberately giving a miss to all the famous places. Killarney, for instance, I looked upon as probably about as Irish as the Tower of London is cockney. I am a cockney myself, and I have only been to the Tower once in my life and that was when I was taken as a small child.

My story, I thought, would be the little unconsidered trifles that nobody else had worried about snapping up. A simply enormous Catholic church, for instance, interested me because they were building it out of concrete when there was any amount of stone obviously handy. And the reason, they said, was because concrete was quicker and they wanted the thing in a hurry to keep pace with the vastly increasing population. That was at Westport, by the way, if any one wants to know. Only I had always read that the population of Ireland was decreasing. This looked the other way, and an increasing population in a land of large families where birth control was regarded not as an academic problem but as simple crime,

seemed to possess potentialities. Another odd little contribution, again, to the store of unconsidered facts that I collected lay in a remark casually made to me by an educated Irishman. A school-teacher I think he was. The social problem, he said, of modern Ireland was infanticide. And while I stared at him rather aghast, he went on to explain his theories. Morals, he said, were all different over there, and indeed they presumably would be in a country where I heard of a priest who would think nothing of publicly denouncing from the altar a girl of his congregation for what he would call 'lightness' and what in a London suburb would pass unchallenged for a little flapperish frivolity. No, he was not thinking of professional immorality, he said, because there practically was none. And he went on to tell me a ghastly tale about the streets of Dublin and of how all the ladies were taken one night and run out of the city and bundled up in the dark on to the top of a hill somewhere. Most of them, he added, with a touch which I hope was unconscious, afterwards found their way over to England. They did not, at all events, get back to their particular houses in Dublin. For all the bad houses were promptly taken over by Nuns and Sisters to prevent that very return. I do not know whether it was true or not, but it struck me as an odd little sidelight on Ireland.

But it was not that sort of thing at all that he was thinking of now, he explained. But the innocent and quite decent girl who for some reason or other slipped from virtue. For she, he said, without the knowledge of the thousand and one tricks which her sister in London would automatically pick up in her progress down the primrose path, would find herself a miserable and terrified exception in a world where everybody else was virtuous. Hence, he said, a baby's body found in a ditch or on a dunghill. And that, he said, was Ireland's trouble. Again, I do not know. But I noted down the story.

So village by village I wandered northwards, sometimes walking, with an occasional lift from a passing car (they give them far more easily than at home), and sometimes taking a bus. Where the railway services are on the whole considerably worse than in England, the bus services become of more importance, and practically every little townlet in Ireland is linked up by one line or another. And once or twice I travelled on a Government mail-cart, though whether I ought to have done I do not know. My system in its way had its points. One did see and hear odds and ends that perhaps the regular descriptive writer travelling by car or train might have missed. One time, I remember, a bus broke down, miles away from anywhere in the middle of a hopeless

wilderness. They do not telephone for a breakdown car because there is no telephone and there is no car. What you do is to stop the first thing that passes and beg it to carry a message for you. And the business took about three hours. There was one passenger I was sorry for. An English lady tourist she was, and she looked as if she was spending her three hours in the mental composition of a letter to the London *Times* indignantly complaining of the general inefficiency of Irish buses and Irish everything. For myself, I looked upon it as an occasion for relaxation, and crawling behind a wall made up a comfortable 'four' with the driver and conductor and another gentleman who in default of the 'Flapper Races' for which he was really bound settled down to make the best of a bad job and lose money somehow. I myself took about three shillings off him, and I believe that the driver and his mate also managed to augment their official salaries. And even then, I scraped up a crumb of information. All about a Round Tower somewhere in the neighbourhood. Only my note was not at all about the Round Tower, but that it was the driver who was telling me it all. For I do not know whether a London bus driver could at short notice lecture on the architecture of Westminster Abbey. As I say, I do not know.

And once another bus presented me with an odd little problem, for, about eleven o'clock at night, it

pulled up suddenly in the dark, and there clambered aboard three Hindus, of whom only one could speak English. Where on earth had they come from and what on earth were they doing there? I shall never know, but the point exercised me for hours.

So in time I came to Belmullet, and a more fascinating little town to spend a quiet holiday I never saw. It is on a tidal armlet of the sea, and perhaps an odd barge or so may slip up once or twice a week. And there is a little steamer that plies to Sligo, and a motor-bus that comes out once a day from Ballina, forty miles or so away and the nearest rail point. It gets in about ten at night, and next morning you can ask for yesterday's papers. Rather an isolated little town it must have been in the days before motors, one would think, when the horse mail-cart might take its eight hours or so. Or again might get bogged up on the road.

And with all its remoteness there is a little hotel. Two hotels, in fact. And they will tell you how this, that, and the other famous writer has stopped there. But when I went to look at the hallowed spot I only saw a row of quite ordinary dumb donkeys standing in Belmullet's main street in front of the hotel. What on earth the town does for its living I do not know. There is a whaling station near, and some one told me about a radio

station the Americans were putting up. But so far at least there is very little night life indeed in Belmullet. For when I arrived there about ten I could not see my way in its High Street and had to call upon some rare reveller up extra late that night to show me the hotel. An ideal place for a quiet holiday. I said a quiet holiday. Only when I asked at the post office if there was a telegram from London, the gentleman looked at me almost with envy. Some folks never know when they are well off.

Ballina (only they pronounce it all wrong, as if it were Ballynar) came next, and I am bound to say that it failed lamentably to give me the copy I wanted. Too thoroughly respectable, the place looked, just like a prosperous small county town in the English midlands. What did interest me was its memorial to a lot of French soldiers who had tried to help with an Irish 'rising' back in the seventeen hundreds. Because the monument had been up for years, back in the time when we English were the masters. And however gallant may have been the people, whether French or Irish, in the 'rising', the point is that it must have been what we called a 'rebellion'. And then we let them go and put up a column right in the middle of the town to the memory of the heroic rebels. It seemed to me that things could not have been so very bitter after all, even in the 'bad

times'. Then down by Ballina Quay, a mile or so out of the town, there are some cottages that rather struck me, because they were limewashed all different colours, just like I have seen houses down in southern Italy. So that when all your life you have been looking upon Ireland either as the 'Emerald Isle' of books or as a thoroughly grey country, it comes as a bit of a surprise to find Italian-looking colours in it. And there is another odd thing that you will find here and there as you tramp through Ireland: a house stuccoed all over in a sort of cubist pattern. In England I had never seen one, and then I gathered that that was exactly why I was seeing them in Ireland: to make them as un-English as possible.

And so by road and bus to Inniscrone and Easky and Sligo I kept on creeping northwards. There was one of the smaller coast-line places—somewhere—where something rather odd happened to me, only I cannot with decency tell you which. The place, if you like, in proper journalistic style, and a faked story; or else the true story in all its stark reality, and no place. But not both together. For in England at least it would seem a horror insupportable.

If, then, I am to chose the true tale we must begin with a tiny village with a row of cottages on a landlocked strand nestling beneath the extremest fringe of a perfect chaos of mountains shelving

backwards and upwards to heights almost invisible in the drowning splutter of rain. And from there you walk and walk and keep on walking for something like two hours. After a little the road will cease. But there can be no doubt possible as to direction. For you will be walking towards a roar that can be heard for miles and miles. Like the thunder of all the guns on the Western Front it sounds; and in a way I suppose that it is the actual Western Front of all Europe itself. When at last I got there I stood appalled and deafened. For Londoner that I am, I had not known that such a sight existed in all the world. I have seen Land's End, and the chirpy trippers staring their stare and then, satisfied, turning away back to their charabancs and their inclusive-priced lunches. But here was World's End, and as far as the eye could reach only the huge rollers roaring in like express trains. As high as houses they were; and while I was staring something flashed past my head with the speed of a stone from a catapult. It *was* a stone, and other stones, small boulders some of them, had been tossed up like straws even half a mile inland. Even when I moved I was still drenched with the spume from those monster waves.

An hour and more I must have stood and stared, and then as I turned away back into the late afternoon mist the world seemed as though I was

the only human in it. After the roar of the Atlantic no other sound was conceivable, and any world of people and shops and streets was millions of miles and millions of years removed. Then as I picked my unfamiliar way over the tussocky swamp, a wilderness half sea and half land, he appeared from nowhere at my elbow—the most wretched old man that ever I had seen. From under a scarecrow's hat his long white hair draggled forlornly. The holes in his coat showed red and scaley the bare flesh beneath. He was talking to me, and not one word that he said could I understand. Gaelic it may have been, or English in some accent incomprehensible to the Londoner. But sixpence I thought it meant, and in cold, commercial print I set it down that 'May God forgive me' for the thought.

And now he was obviously trying to lead me, showing me where to place my feet from hummock to hummock, until at last we got there. To a cottage so low and small and mean that a quarter of a mile away I had not even seen it in all that smother of spume and mist and driving rain. There were three of them inside it, all fine, upstanding young men, and two of them I could understand but little better than the father. But the third, who sat himself next to me, was speaking English with an accent better, because more careful, than my own. I was so astonished that

I could find no words to question him, but seated myself as he bade me to the simple meal. Even then he spoke very little indeed, and ever so simply. I had admired the sea, then? Yes, he believed that it had not its equal anywhere in Europe. And then I said it. Perhaps it was that he had travelled? A little, he replied—a very little. He lived, as it happened, in Paris.

At the word I almost fell off the rough chair. At home, of course, in Hornsey it would sound nothing. But here, a thousand miles from nowhere, and in a stone and mud cottage half smoked out from a turf fire, it seemed somehow like a maniac's dream. And then pulling myself together I tried to remember the bits and bobs I knew about Paris. There is the Moulin Rouge, of course, and what was the name of that other place? And is there not the Rue Pigale, or some such name? And, as one man of the world to another, I was on the verge of commencing a little conversation on mutual memories of the Gay City. Only just at that moment my eye happened to catch on a little broken-glassed red lamp flickering on the rough chimney-shelf before a crucifix. And somehow the Red Mill scarcely seemed to fit into the atmosphere. And I sat on in uneasy silence.

It was a ghastly business, that bit of a meal. The old man would keep sipping at his mug of raw, black tea, and then he would mutter a bit.

To himself, I supposed, for I could not properly catch a single word. And the other two scarcely spoke at all. Only the man next to me would occasionally drop a word. And I could not make out what I was supposed to be doing there at all. And, God forgive me again, but I was wondering about the tea and what on earth I decently ought to offer to pay for it. I had not really wanted it, you see. I had not wanted to come, only the Man from Paris had practically forced me to sit down and begin. One cannot argue with some one who does not speak. And then it happened. For the old man bursting into tears stood up, and pushing his platter away, knocked over his chair, and fairly rushed out of the room and into that gale-swept desolation without.

'You will, if you please, forgive my father,' said my neighbour, 'but we are in trouble. It was only this morning that we buried my mother.' And as I blurted out things as fast as the words would come—how terrible it was, and my apologies and how not for worlds would I have intruded had I known about it, and all the rest of the things any one would say—he went on exactly as if I had not spoken. It was their custom, he said, to allow nothing to interfere with the duty of hospitality. Here was a stranger on the foreshore, and with the tide those streamlets rose faster than perhaps the foreigner might suspect. It was better

to guide him to firm ground before he got his feet wet. And I swear that he said the thing without a ghost of any sarcasm. With all his careful speech of education he was far too simple for any subtleties of refined sarcasm. The finest gentlemen do not use the thing. That man meant to the very syllable precisely what he said.

And as I swallowed the tea before me and made shamefacedly and almost affrightened for the door, I told him once more what an awful and terrible thing it was. 'But it is not awful at all,' he said. 'For, you see, I am at the college in Paris, and soon, if God wills, I shall be a priest and able the better to pray for my mother.' And as I stumbled across all those miles of dreariness back to the fringe of the world I came from I was stunned and half-dazed by the thunder of the waters and the strength of the gale. And by other things as well.

So powerfully did the thing impress me that I was almost seeing it with my eyes shut for hours afterwards. And when even a couple of days later I met somebody I could really talk to, it was the very first thing that I mentioned. And then I was impressed again, only by another point of view. A lady it was, I mean an educated Irish gentlewoman who besides her own country knew England and I imagine the Continent as well. And it was her son who had picked me up in a

car when I was walking, and had then quite casually asked me home to lunch. And of course I had not wanted to go—not where it was likely that I should meet a lady.

It is all very well of course to tramp back-of-beyond roads in a pair of stained flannel trousers that have not seen a press for a week and a drill shirt a bit the worse for wear. And then I think my last razor-blade had gone a bit off colour and I had not been able to get a new packet. But when it comes to meeting ladies at lunch of course it is all a different matter altogether. And I would not have gone only the man almost dragged me in with him. And then his mother was ever so nice, and while we were talking I almost forgot about my clothes. And I told her about the old man, and she did not see it my way at all.

Ireland, she said, was full of young men going to be priests: fishermen's sons or labourers', and they would save up and put penny to penny, and the family would deny themselves almost everything if the chosen child could but get his chance. (But I had thought that it was only in Scotland that they did that sort of thing.) Any number of Irish young men were at the college in Paris. And she did not seem particularly impressed.

And as for the hospitality, that, she said, was right enough. Would not anybody take in a stranger and give him a meal? (Well, everybody

would not. For I would not myself, not under those circumstances.) But, she went on, she did hope that I had sympathized properly with the poor old man. And of course I had not. It was the very last thing in the whole world that I should ever think of doing.

If my house in Hornsey was burned down with my wife and all my children in it I should of course be sorry. But my every instinct would be to try to look as unconcerned as though, on the whole, the matter rather bored me. And I should expect my friends to behave as though they were unaware that anything out of the ordinary had happened. The very height of impertinence, I think, would be any beyond the most perfunctory condolence. And I hope and pray that I might succeed in looking bored. For I am an Englishman, and that on the whole is the way that God has built us. And when I told that to the lady she seemed to understand. I think that she had travelled.

'But,' she said, 'you rather objected to the prospect of sitting down to lunch with a strange hostess because you happened to think yourself a trifle dishevelled. But an Irishman would never have given it a second thought. We are different, you see.' And when I thought it over I agreed. For I like my buttons, so to speak, to be polished up to the uttermost twinkle, but my emotions I prefer to keep to myself.

Ireland is different. It is not a matter of a few second-rate counties lopped off England by the accident of St. George's Channel and a couple of hours or so on a steamer. The place, if we are to own the truth, is a foreign country.

CHAPTER FIVE

AS I wandered up by Sligo the foreign country feeling grew stronger still. Half left, as you round the bay from the southward, stand some simply enormous mountains that somehow give the sense of a Hinterland only waiting to be explored. Why on earth they cannot advertise the place, with its lakes and mountains and woods, and turn it into an even more glorious Killarney (as far as I could make out by comparing pictures of the views), I do not know. But the point is that they have not done it to any extent. At least as far as England is concerned, it is still a practically unknown land.

There was a Holy Well that they sent me to, standing in the woods on the edge of the lough a couple of miles out of the town, and when you get there you find they have built a Grotto just like Lourdes. There were quite a lot more people there. It seemed a regular afternoon walk, only one rather wishes that when they make a pilgrimage and a picnic combined of the thing they would not leave so many paper bags about. But that of course was not my business. Only to English eyes it does look odd to see married couples, sweethearts, single young men by themselves,

a stream of children under the care of Sisters, all taking it as a matter of course to stroll out on a Sunday afternoon and then kneel down at an open-air Grotto just as if they were respectably in church. And then just as I was turning away and rather wondering where to go next, a young man rose from his prayers and came up to me and asked if I knew Cairn something. It seemed that there was a view from there that no stranger ought to miss. And before I had answered him he had joined me, and with him, to my intense surprise, a young woman. And they walked with me quite a way, not leaving me, in fact, till they were quite sure that I could not miss the path to Cairn whatever it was. The view, as it happened, was quite fine, but the point that got me was a boy and a girl actually going to a shrine to pray and then taking the trouble to give up a bit of their precious time together in trying to help a total stranger. It struck me as one of the most astonishing things that I had ever known. And then as I came down the Cairn another way, two boys out *en garçon* insisted upon showing me the right road and walking with me almost into the town. I walked very fast, they said. I had been an English officer, of course. They recognized the stride. And they were quite admiring about it. In point of fact, though, I am not an ex-officer. But I was the usual Tommy of course for the usual

four years, and it may be that after all this time some fragment of the regulation pace remains to me. But that is all. Only I was so struck by the way these lads kept harking back to the little matter. There was a something smart, they said, that could always be picked out about the English soldier's walk. Their elder brother now, he had fought against us.

The same thing kept coming again and again all through Ireland. I had always thought that the British soldier was anathema in the country, and then about the very first thing that I had seen at Blackrock, near Dublin, was a whole crowd of men in blue uniforms. I recognized the blue, because I once wore it myself for some months, and it is the uniform of the English Ministry of Pensions. And when I asked about them, these were British pensioners, and they seemed on the very best terms possible with everybody else. Then at Waterford, late on, I ran into a 'flag day' for the British Legion, and apparently every soul in the city down to the three-year-olds was in warm approval of the English Army. It all seemed a little conflicting with my previous notions.

About the only other point that off-hand I can particularly recall about Sligo was that I did not see anything especially wrong with it. The place looked just an ordinary, quite prosperous small country town. And yet I seemed to remember it

once cropping up in our papers at home as one of the most thoroughly corrupt and disreputable places in the world. I do not know why, and I cannot find the reference, but I do know that I particularly looked for the disreputability and could not find it.

And another thing there that I somehow missed was a football match. I know there had been one, because I met the victorious team carrying their trophy home through Sligo's main street. And there was an enormous crowd and an apparently rather temperamental lady with tears streaming down her face and her hair streaming down her back, trying to fight her way through to get at the gentleman carrying the cup. Though whether she wished to congratulate him or not I do not know. But she obviously took her football very much in earnest. I do wish that I had seen the match. I did not see a game in all Ireland, and I should have liked to. They play a sort of code of their own, rather like Rugby, only not quite. Only it must be a bit awkward, one must think, not being able to have any international games. But when I put that to some one he told me that that was the great advantage of Gaelic football, and that it was officially encouraged that way on purpose to make Irish sport as un-Saxon as possible. And I did not see any hurley either. But in one month I saw more fives courts than at

home I had seen in all the years since I left school. They have turned it almost into a national form of athleticism, and every police barracks has its court.

How the Gaelic idea works in the language way I do not of course know. But there seems a lot more in the thing than the Englishman suspects. We look upon it of course as a language which when it was very nearly as moribund as say ancient Cornish was suddenly subjected to a purely artificial and rather clumsy academic revival simply for political purposes. That at least was what I had always understood. And I had heard the story, too, about the first Free State stamps and how the learned professors could not even get the lettering right, and so they had to call the issue in again. A very ridiculous business it all seemed. But when you got out here it was different. Some one was telling me about a great Gaelic congress somewhere, with delegates from Ireland and Wales, the Scottish Highlands and the Isle of Man and even Brittany. So the business did not seem so very moribund after all. Then you can draw a line across a whole strip of Ireland and say that on the other side of it Gaelic, so far from ever having died out at all, was, up to even a few years ago, the actual spoken language of all the people, and that half of them there are speaking it still, even if as alternative to English,

simply as learned from their parents. And now they are making it compulsory all over the Free State, so that the whole of the new generation is growing up as a Gaelic-speaking people. There is one place where the old Gaelic was about at its strongest, and they have set up a sort of college there, sending school-teachers in relays to sit at the feet of the ancients before it is too late, and so to snatch the fire and spread it through every school and home of the Saorstat Eireann.

As to what good the thing may be is not my business; but I did listen to arguments about it and about, mostly in 'groceries' and places where they talk. Belgium I know kept cropping up in the business, and how she finds it quite easy to be bilingual. And then there was Holland and how they speak German to do most of their business and keep Dutch as a national tongue to preserve the sense of nationdom. And then some one once quoted in opposition a bit from a paper about America. Look at America, he said, and how they have managed without a national language. And a man who had not spoken before came in with precisely what I should like to have said myself, if I had not thought it might have sounded rude from a stranger. 'Well,' he said, 'look at America then. Do look at it. And just listen to it.'

That was another thing that kept astonishing

me—the half-dislike of America and Americans that I was always running into. Because I had always thought that to the Irishman the most favoured nation would be America and that the returned Irish-American would be regarded with envy and reverence. And he was not—not at least so far as I could ever see. Once I had read a newspaper article saying that when the day came that at last Ireland was free there would pour in from the Great Country across the Atlantic a stream of life-giving gold refreshing and reviving an Erin parched with her years of bondage. I particularly remembered the thing, because I had thought at the time how very like it sounded to Mr. Lloyd George in his finer periods. And a lot of people probably believed it too. And then the life-giving stream had not poured in. Tens of thousands of dollars do come into the Irish post office every year from sons and daughters emigrated to the States, but of capital for Irish industry there has been next to none. So at least they told me. And I can say that so far as I could see myself they were certainly not doing any particular worshipping of the Irish-American.

From Sligo I went out to a place called Rosses Point, which, as far as I could make out from the map, seemed to be a sort of local Southend. It was obviously the proper thing to do, for there were buses starting every few minutes, and on a

Sunday the fun would be at its fastest and most furious. For Southern Ireland runs rather the Continental Sunday idea, with the entire population going to one of the packed churches in the morning and afterwards amusing itself unrestrained by the law. All the small-town theatres and places are open, and even if the village boasts a cinema only open once a week, it will be on the Sunday that it gives its show. In one place I passed, the local movie house was owned by the church, and the priests gave out its attractions with the other announcements of Sunday morning.

The bus from Sligo was packed, with everybody sitting on everybody else's knees in the best of spirits, and I anticipated the highest of jinks at the other end. And then there was nothing of any sort. About two good hotels and one or two minor ones and tea-houses and places. If you could satisfy the hotel people about your birth-certificate and where you slept last night you could get a drink. And when you had solemnly drunk it you could go and walk on an enormous common kind of place with its turf stretching down to the edge of the cliff overlooking the Atlantic. And that was what every one had come out for. And it was the same in every pleasure place that I touched in the length and breadth of the Free State. To the foreigner, and that was what I was, the Innocence of Ireland is positively amazing.

It was the tiny towns that had astonished me at first. I had been expecting a rollicking atmosphere, something like I had read of in the books, and the prim half-empty streets had fairly hit me on the head with their decorum. A few girls and boys there might be out if the evening was fine, but the couples would never be mixed. Two boys might meet two girls and exchange a word or two of chaff and so pass on. But they always did pass on, boy with boy and girl with girl. There was no pairing off. The 'monkey parade' of every English town and suburb was simply non-existent so far as I could see. The thing had so struck me that I had asked an Irishman about it. He had been drinking stout in a 'grocery' and I had thought that he would come out with something rollicking. And, instead, his answer had been startlingly brief. 'Immorality,' he had said, 'is not encouraged in Ireland.'

The Dublin sea-side towns, Galway's Salthill, Inniscrone, this place, they were all the same in that respect. There was a dancing hall at Rosses Point, it was true, and I thought that perhaps I might get copy from that. I had heard about them. They are denounced in every paper as about the wickedest places in Ireland. And so for all I know they may be. But the sample I saw would not have demoralized an infant Sunday School trained to the standards of English ideas.

Eighteenpence you pay to go in if you call yourself a gentleman, or it is a shilling for a lady. I paid eighteenpence myself simply to watch the orgie. But I could have danced if I had wanted to—and had known how to. Just go up to any girl you wish and ask her. You need no introduction and she will not be offended. And generally she will dance. But that is all. She will not want any chocolate or anything to drink or smoke, and she most certainly does not want to make an appointment ever to see you again, and she equally certainly expects to be taken back to her place the instant the music stops. And next dance somebody else will ask her. And the thing goes on till about two in the morning. And that, as far as the outsider can see, is all that there is in it. Even the Church's complaint does not seem to be that the places lead to moral harm, but that they keep the young folk up too late to be in time for next morning's early Mass.

When I left the place it was dark. There is a Metal Man standing on a pillar in the estuary pointing out the fairway, and an electric lamp somewhere in his giant stomach flashes out in alternation with the real lighthouse over there out in the Atlantic itself. And those are about the only lights that there are. Certainly there are none at all on the Common itself. Not even one solitary lamp all the way to the edge of the cliff.

Every English reader has known places where each tuft of high rushes would have been a-twitter with the gigglings of girls and the whispering grass would have flickered with the glow-worms of lighted cigarettes. But here the cigarettes were on the move, and against the skyline over the sea one could see the couples always gravely walking, boy with boy and girl with girl. The next parish might be New York, but the common at Rosses Point was still in Ireland. And as the buses rocked back to Sligo, about three hours after the time that they would have stopped in London, everybody was as gay as possible with the sense of having enjoyed a riotously joyful night.

Bundoran was my next place, and I did not stop there. The 'Brighton of Ireland' they call it, and one suspects that the gentleman who first coined the phrase had never been to Brighton. For how on earth you could tell the story about the stockbroker and the chorus-lady in that atmosphere I do not see. To every ten visitors in the little hotels and boarding-houses there will be an average of perhaps two priests, with that air of temporarily rollicking worldliness which seems to distinguish the priest taking his annual holiday. A charming little place with a wonderful sea. But it was not a Brighton. Most emphatically not.

All this time from Galway of course I was

keeping something like close to the sea, and once or twice I had a trip on it. I had tried first at Galway itself, and it would have been easy enough to have got to England from there. But a local coastal outing, except the thing to the Aran Islands, I had not seemed able to compass, and my first chance had not come until later on. It seems perhaps fairer not to give the actual place-name though, since for all I know I might have been breaking some regulations about passenger-carrying without a licence.

About half-past five in the morning—' half-five ' as they call it out there—the business first started. That had been the time that they had mentioned the night before when the subject was first broached and as I then knew no better than to want the outing I was at the quay-side almost to the stroke of the clock. And as I looked over the water-edge a prospect less inviting, it struck me, I had never seen.

In the rainy dawn the little grass-grown wharf seemed the very acme of desolation, and an islet in the deserted estuary, almost derelict of trade these many years, had an aspect of sullen and sodden misery. So dense was the mist that the upper half of the mountain immediately behind me was totally veiled. The single small sailing barge jerking at the ropes that moored her to rusty rings might have been a permanent part of

the landscape, with not a sign of life about her. And then as I watched her a sort of trap-door thing opened and the head of my host-to-be solemnly appeared with something of the effect of Giant Blunderbore coming up through a pantomime stage-trap.

With many qualities, he was not a conversationalist, and with the briefest of nods to me he made his toilet by the simple process of doing up his boot-laces, walked to the end of the empty jetty, and, spitting into the water, fell into a sort of reverie of the far distance. 'It's none too bad,' he said, and then, after a further reverie of a quarter of an hour or so, he continued the sentence, 'but it's none too good.' Where two brothers comprise the entire ownership, directorate, captaincy, and crew of a tiny sailing barge one imagines that winds and tides count for more than with, say, the cross-Channel packets. In the end, anyway, his brother agreeing with the diagnosis, we postponed sailing till the evening tide, and all that day they let me help with the sacks of flour and bits of sheet-iron that made up our cargo, much, I suppose, on the same principle as I have occasionally seen my wife allow our cat to assist her in the management of her sewing-machine. But you have no idea how heavy sheet-iron roofing is to lift.

How big the barge was I do not know in terms

of tonnage, but I should say that it was about as long as our back garden at home. And if the description is still insufficient, I would add that our garden is about big enough to hang out the baby's average laundry. So now you ought to know the size of the boat—'hookers' they call them. There were two holes in her—a big one for the cargo and a little one at the end which turned out to be the cabin for four of us: the two men—and they were so alike that I could only tell them apart because one had shaved yesterday and the other had not—myself, and Paddy. This was the seven-year-old son of one of the men, and it was his pleasure, it appeared, to take his vacation from school in this fashion. There was one bunk with a bag of straw in it for the captain, and two planks were laid together as a shelf for me. The other brother was to sleep on the bare floor, and Paddy had to coil himself into a very narrow hole along with three loaves of bread, a rasher or so of bacon, some potatoes, and a packet of margarine. I asked what would happen if we were out to sea long, and they pointed laconically at the sacks of flour. There was a bit of turf fire in our cabin, and I suppose the idea was that we could make bread. Though I personally was not so sure. Then as presently it dawned on me that they had not a watch between them, or a compass or even a lantern, I got the impression that there were

few things that they could not do. With about three inches of candle-stump intended for cabin illumination these men were prepared to creep their boat round the fringes of the Atlantic.

About seven that night we started, and about three minutes past I was wet through. I had a raincoat. Forty-seven and sixpence it cost me in the Crouch End Broadway, but I do not think that the gentleman who sold it me had ever seriously considered hooker-sailing round the farthest west of Ireland. I have been to sea before, of course, but the Margate boats have sides. There were no proper edges to this thing, and seas kept breaking over and deluging me. The men had nothing at all. I had thought that they would produce sea-boots and oilskins and things, but they did not. And while at home my own small boy of seven on showery mornings puts on a sou'-wester hat to go to his school about a quarter of a mile away, Paddy here was to our notions practically naked and riotously happy. By and by as we worked out of the estuary and into the open they let the boy steer the thing, and he stood to the tiller in positive glory. I was rather glad that they did not think of inviting me to take a turn. For I could not have stood at all.

As it grew dark they announced that we were now in harbour and so could rest for the night. I saw no harbour at all, not even a pier, not a

light anywhere. But down came the sail, and out into the impenetrable darkness they threw a toy anchor at the end of a bit of clothes line. We were now all nice and snug for the night, they said, and could go below. Now whether it was their tobacco smoke (I was not smoking myself at the moment), or not being used to the smell of the turf fire, or the boat popping up and down, or what, I do not know, but the fact remains that quite soon I began to feel curiously unwell. And about a minute later I was unwell. And for the whole of that awful night and for most of next day I kept on being unwell at the average rate of about once to every twenty minutes or so.

You would never think it possible, but it is. And after about the fourth episode it became hopeless even to be unwell by myself, and one or other of the men had to hold me. I could not tell them apart now, except that while one always said, 'I told ye not to come,' the other's stock remark every time was that it would do me good, now. Only it did not. Till in the end they got tired of it, and the crowning indignity came when they told Paddy to hold me. To be gripped by the slack of the trousers by a boy forty years one's junior is humiliating. I grew to loathe that child.

An eternity later we seemed somehow to reach the tiniest of harbours in a barren wilderness near some mountains, and the men dragged me home

with them. I imagine that they were afraid of my dying in their hooker. Paddy's mother came to the door to welcome us, but instead of saying 'Acushla' or something akin as she should have done, she merely aimed a woman's cuff at her son's head (he dodged it like a man) and fell to abusing his father. As far as I could make out the child had gone to sea without the preliminary of mentioning the matter to his mother at all. What was worse, he had done it before.

Pushing a way irresponsively through his family, Paddy reached the ancestral hearth, and standing astride spat imperturbably into the fire with an air which somehow I seemed to have seen before. I rather fancy that the boy will grow up to be a seaman.

Thinking things over as I slowly recovered from that nightmare trip I was of opinion that Columbus' first name would not be Christopher at all. It was probably Padric O'Columb blown out to sea a bit farther than he intended. And I only hope that his first action on landing on the far side of the Atlantic may not have been his usual gesture of expectoration.

CHAPTER SIX

THERE is a theatre up a back street in Messina in Sicily where for about fivepence you can get past the little bar place where they sell peanut things and into a real box with the most glorious view of the happenings in the wings opposite. It is not of course at all the theatre to which a cabman would drive a tourist picked up from one of the hotels, but for all that it has its points. The night that I went the entire company, from grandmother down to the littlest baby but one of all, were at supper, and I was far more interested in them than in the play, of which indeed, not understanding any Italian, I was unable to follow a single line. But I think from the very gorgeous placards outside that it had something to do with the Life and Unhappy Death of Musolino who was officially the last of the local bandits down that way.

From time to time as the exigencies of the drama demanded one or other of the players would rise from the communal table and, hastily stuffing a piece of sausage into his mouth, dash on to take up his lines. They did not seem too letter-perfect, and the lady who was prompting from a sort of rabbit-hutch in the middle of the stage was kept quite busy. As, too, she had to attend to the

more obvious needs of her baby, her job was anything but a sinecure. And when the Cowardly Carabinieri had treacherously shot Musolino in the back (he went down with a most scrumptious wallop), the promptress was given still another task. For in company with St. Francis she had to descend from the flies and take her share of hauling the poor corpse up to Paradise.

The baby, of course, howled like anything while its mother was away, and one of the wires jammed for a minute, leaving the trio temporarily suspended at rather an awkward angle. But on the whole the apotheosis went off splendidly. And when St. Francis, his tin halo now tipped back a trifle rakishly, came down from Heaven to sell us lottery tickets, everybody was as happy as happy could be. And I never thought that I should see anything like it again. But I did. And in Ireland of all places.

It was in the town hall of a biggish village, and the bills outside said that it would begin at eight. In a place where a play would come but rarely, it might be as well to be early, and it would be something after seven when I pushed open the shabby door. Nothing like being in good time. And I was. For the company was just rehearsing the parts for the evening's show. I suspect that they were fairly used to the business, putting on as they did a fresh bill nightly, generally selected

by the way from the voluminous repertoire of the late Mr. Dicks' moral (and copyright expired) melodramas. At all events, my entry created no awkwardness, and indeed in the intervals of their cues they found time to welcome me warmly as at once a foreigner and the first spring of their audience-to-be.

I think that I saw everything: the ingeniously collapsible scenery that the gentlemen of the caste at once painted and erected, and the stage planks made to dismount for the easy fitting into a lorry. Counting the pianist and the gentleman who doubled villains with the trap-drum, there were seven of them in all. And I only hope that it may have been their lucky number. Though I doubt it. I saw the wardrobes—a Tate's sugar-box is the easiest way of carrying them—and some of them too had to double their parts. Take, for instance, the Prisoner of Zenda's trousers, and by turning them inside out they become Napoleon's cocked hat for purposes of the 'Royal Divorce'. I think it was Napoleon's hat. Anyway, I remember the trousers well. Government stock, postmen's rejecteds, they had been, and then the leading lady had sown braid down the sides to make them more princely and rich-looking. There are famous actresses in London who would do less for their husbands.

Then afterwards, when everybody knew their

parts and we were only waiting for the audience, they let me stand in the eighteen-inch space at the back of the curtain that made up the dressing-rooms. Left-hand side, of course, for the right was reserved for the ladies, an old towel hanging on a string decorously dividing the sexes. And a very long time indeed we waited, though as the trap-drum gentleman had a delightful trick of wielding his implements as though each bang were to be the very last, such of the audience as had trickled in already were kept in constant and delicious expectation of the rising of the curtain. We behind of course were better informed, the 'heavy lead' keeping us posted up as to the latest state of the ninepences taken at the door. But of course the waiting was all horribly bad for *morale*, and even as I watched, one of our seven little sixpenny oil-lamp footlights collapsed under the strain and had to be carried off-stage guttering shamefully.

While I waited I was talking to the leading lady. It was of course a gay and glorious life, but even being leading lady, it seemed, carried its responsibilities. One had of course one's bit of washing to do every morning, just rubbing out one's wardrobe for the splendours of the night. And there might be mending. Or there were things with the props which even the ladies had to help with. And then of course there was the child.

By rights at seven she ought to be learning her reading and writing. But then one cannot do everything. And the child, too, would be fairly busy with her own parts. And seven nights a week, of course. No, she did not think there was any Child Performers' Regulation Act in Ireland. In seven years at least she had never heard of any. But then she did not know very much about the country. English she was herself, and proud of it. It would be certainly fine, she owned, to see Peckham High Street again, and especially on a Saturday night. And she would not say but what she might swop all the glories of leading lady for the chance. But there, what was the use of talking, when the fare home alone would be thirty shillings? And just then the trap-drummer deserted his cymbal things to leap into his villain's clothes, the curtain wobbled slowly up, and the piece beginning, we had to drop our little conversation.

Could they act, those people? They could and they did. And in the desperate earnest of the quest for bread, even the stilted heroics of the regretted and regrettable Mr. Dicks seemed to ring true. The play was a Tragedy, only with no programmes it did not tell you which was supposed to be the heroine. But I think I knew. I should rather like to have seen her in, say, the 'Lights of London'. And it was the only time in all Ireland that I went to a real stage play.

Generally, of course, I had to spend my evenings in the public-house or wherever it was that I stopped. All kinds of places I tried, from real hotels to the next door to common lodging-house place, and quite odd to English ideas some of them were. One place I remember that looked like a really hard-drinking bar, and it had a Christian Brother stopping there as a permanent lodger. And the drinking was not so very hard as it might have been. And then there was a very funny place where it said 'Meals for Travellers', and in my capacity as a traveller I asked if I could have a chop. Certainly I could have a chop, the lady said. Why could I not have a chop, now? And where was the chop? Had I brought it with me? And it dawned upon me that this was the sort of establishment where the guests brought their own food in to be cooked. And then, as against this, I have stopped at the quite good hotels where the English tourists would put up.

Quite rude a party of them once were to me as I sat at the long table in my shabby tramping clothes, deliberately talking over my head under the obvious impression that I was a common native. Until one of them, demanding that I should pass the salt or something, I fairly made him jump. For even if I do live in Hornsey (and besides, one can always call it Muswell Hill) I can talk Kensington as well as anybody, and I soon

made those people realize that they lived in the wrong part of London, drove the wrong sort of car, and in short were not the type of persons that I was accustomed to be asked to know. And then of course they were extremely anxious to include me in their conversation, which was entirely directed upon the shortcomings of Irish hotels. And I had to shut them up by asking with a shrug if they knew the Ritz in Madrid. Though I only wish that I knew whether there is such an hotel or not, and if so whether it is extremely good or extremely bad. For I myself have never been in Spain. But, anyway, it silenced them, and I think that they deserved it.

I myself cannot see what on earth there was to grumble at. Townlets of a size that in England would merely have a drinking bar would have a little hotel with sanitation, a bathroom, and as often as not electric light. There would not as a rule be a *table d'hôte* dinner, but there was invariably a meal. There would be no German-Swiss waiters, but Irish girls entirely unsubservient and not in the least looking out for tips. And then you came to the cheaper sort of place where the tourist would not be expected at all, and even that you would find was quite good in its way. Only, Continental fashion, in this type of place there would as often as not be two or three beds to the room. And another foreign-looking trick was the

seat that they nearly always put outside in the street. Very often again the little small-town inn would help out its rent by leasing off a sitting-room to some local veterinary surgeon or dentist. Oddly trustful they seemed to be about letting the stray guest take his breakfast in the room, and many a time I might have got away with quite a decent bag of doubtless chatty little letters bearing on their envelopes the sign of the Irish Income Tax. But they probably would be a little more careful in the real tourist hotels.

Whether Ireland will turn or not into a regular touring country for the English I do not know. As far as I could make out there are two schools of thought on the subject—one, a minority party, holding it as against the national dignity. 'We do not,' somebody told me, 'want to make the place like England, always crying out for American dollars. Your annual newspaper leaders,' he said, 'about making the country more attractive to the tourist and so saving so many thousands of American dollars from going to Paris, seem to us something to avoid.' (And it had never before struck me that way.)

On the other hand, there is an enormous majority that seems in favour of opening up Ireland as a touring country in every way. The Travelling Association, or whatever it is, has sign-posted every road in clearest English lettering, and maps

and information offices are at hand on every side. And the campaign, one can see, is having its effect. Ireland, the onlooker would say, is itself a land of small motor-cars. Every village inn has its couple to hire. But when on the road you see a big car you can look behind it and be fairly certain of finding the 'G.B.' mark of the English tourist. And there are hundreds of them. Somebody told me that they were privileged, but I do not know. But it was an Irish bus driver and he was grumbling about a police speed-trap. And then as an enormous car raced past I pointed at it. But that, he said, the Guards would never halt. According to him, the tourist was never trapped. If it was true, it struck me as infernally unfair.

Somewhere in quite a recent English guide-book to Ireland I saw the statement that 'many of the hotels are not so bad as they look', and having been in Ireland it struck me as funny. For you will often find electric light in hotels so tiny that their 'opposite numbers' at home would still be in the oil-lamp and tallow-candle stage (only Ireland seems somehow to have missed the Gas Age). And it has nothing at all to do with the Shannon scheme, the little local electric light concerns having been going for years. But I do not know what will happen to them when the national system gets into being.

You see its poles all over the country, very much

as in France or Italy. Only the things being poles and not tripods are not so ugly. And Ireland is very proud indeed about it, and at every station you will see advertisements of cheap trains to Limerick just to let people have a look at the barrages and things. And then as far as I could make out, Ireland was extraordinarily sorry that England had not had the contract for the works. It went to the lowest tender and Germany got it. And as I was told again and again if England had got it there would have been more money for the country. 'For the Englishman,' they said, 'enjoys himself and spends. He brings his family and they all spend money. And Ireland might have had the bulk of their salaries.' Whereas when the thrifty German contractors and engineers came along the first thing they did was to erect a sort of fortress barricade, practically with sentries at its gates. And inside they put up a town of huts made of sections brought from Germany. And canteens, with every article sold of German origin. So that hardly a penny was spent in Ireland except on the barest wages of the cheap Irish labour taken on for the simple navvying work. Until in time the indignant locality rioted. So much so, in fact, that the Free State Army had to be called in to restore order. Lots of interesting odds-and-ends like that you pick up going through the country my way.

There are, however, other ways of travelling, as in one of my public-house evenings I gathered. I was seeing nothing at all, a gentleman told me, missing Killarney and all the rest of the famous scenery bits. That was after we got friendly, for when we first met he hardly spoke at all, taking me, in fact, for a native. He himself was an English chauffeur, and generally of course he stopped in a proper hotel with His People ; only this time there had not been room for him and they had sent him round to the public-house for a bed. It was his first time with the natives, and I think he was a little relieved to find us not at the moment drinking blood out of skulls. And then to an admiring audience he settled down to tell us all about it.

Every year, it seems, he and His People (who may or may not have belonged to the God of Abraham) did some country. Or was it that some country did them ? This year, anyway, they were doing Ireland. The process consists in driving every day as far as possible without seeing anything at all, and to achieve this result one has of course to have a very powerful and costly machine. He told us all about it, and how it has valves and ball-bearings and things. I am almost certain it has ball-bearings. Certainly it has pneumatic tyres. It goes ever so fast, and it is called a Rolls-Royce. Some of the valves gave a bit of

trouble explaining, but he was really very good and went over and over it again till at last we did begin to grasp the elements of the subject. 'Well well, sorr,' and 'Is that so, sorr?' the admiring chorus came again and again. I am proud to say that I got it out several times myself, and I flatter myself that I got the precise accent obviously demanded by the occasion. And it was hours before the unfortunate man discovered that nearly every soul in the circle of primitive tribesmen sitting round that public-house kitchen fire was a driver on one or other of the lines of motor-buses that linked up at the townlet. And nobody gave so much as a single snigger.

They made up for it upstairs, though, and it was hours before the other two in my room would let me go to sleep. I especially remember that particular room, because it had two perfectly extraordinary pictures in it, one of a soul being saved and the other of a man being damned and going straight from his bed into a truly realistic hell. It was the 'damned' one that was over my bed. The others particularly pointed it out to me. One of them, though, was only a conductor, so anyway one would not be likely to take his word on the subject of destinations. Travelling my way one did see life!

There was another public-house I remember where, after closing time had come and they had

shut the bar up, only leaving two or three of the more favoured 'regulars' inside, they switched on a gramophone and one of the girls danced to it. A daughter I should think she would be, for they do not have barmaids in those sort of places. Anyway, there we were, and very nice it all was. And then about half-past eleven or so the very same girl suddenly snapped the gramophone to and announced decisively that it was bedtime. I, she supposed as she turned the townspeople out, would as an Englishman be of course a Protestant? Only I happened, I said, to be a Catholic. Then, as that was so, she went on, I should probably wish to join her mother and the rest in the saying of the Rosary. Now that, I think, could never have happened in an English small-town inn.

There was another musical evening too, with another gramophone playing Irish reels and jigs, and men taking it in turn to dance to the thing. But not a bit like the things we see in Irish turns on the music-halls at home. Ever so decorous and almost prim. It is what they teach them now in the schools, on the same principle that they teach them their painstaking Gaelic. And then some one sang some of that too.

There was an old man sitting there, and he took strong exception to the Irish. It was not, he said, the true Gaelic at all, not the same stuff that as a lad he had learned from his father without any of

your schooling at all. And to make his point he started singing himself, with no gramophone or anything else. An interminable song it was, but what it was all about I do not know. Because of course I could not understand a single word of it. So for my special benefit he started again with some of the old Irish songs in English, and this time I understood very well indeed. Some of them must have come down from the Rebellion times of 1798, and one of them was about the potato famine of the eighteen-forties and how we English starved the Irish. The odd thing was that the old man apologized to me before each song, and then went on to sing it. All about English soldiers being tyrants and despots and things, and once, I know, we were 'demons'. And to nearly all these things the people knew the chorus, and sang it. There was one bit about 'England quaking' that went with such a swing that only just in time did I pull myself up from joining in it. Real pep they put into the business, and to one bit about hating England I put it genially to the man next to me that he sang the verse as though he really meant it. 'But I do mean it,' he said, 'and so does every one else in this room.' It made me jump a bit, for, after all, though a joke is a joke there is a limit. I am English and I must not for very decency listen to everything. And yet if I walked out into that one-horse village ten

miles from anywhere, where on earth was I to spend the night ? I was fumbling uneasily for my hat when the atmosphere cleared again. 'But,' the man went on, 'my hating England does not mean that I hate the English.' I tell you it was all most peculiar.

Perhaps the most extraordinary bit of all came at the very end just before we went upstairs. First they sang the 'Soldiers' Song', the thing that has become the sort of national anthem for the modern Free State. Personally it did not impress me very much. Not the words at least. The only soldiers that I ever knew mostly only sang one song, and that was not about being soldiers at all. It was called 'I Want to Go 'Ome', and we sang it once coming down from Pilkem Ridge. Anyway, this blessed thing was their song, and it seemed only civil to stand up to it. So I did. Then as a sort of return compliment they said that they would wish to sing 'God Save the King', only as nowadays the younger generation of Ireland generally does not know the words I should have to lead them.

And then standing bolt upright with all those kindly people waiting gravely and courteously for me to begin, the awful and almost inconceivable thing came to me. I am an Englishman; I believe with all my heart and soul in 'The King' and all that it stands for; and I would wish the

thing to be played all round the world in salute to the Union Jack. But as I stood there the dreadful knowledge suddenly came to me that I do not know the words of it. Except just the opening lines that they play as you leave the theatre.

Most fortunately the old man who had sung the rebel-despot songs was able to help me out. But it was an awfully near thing.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BEFORE I left the coast-line to turn inland I had one more little voyage. It started as usual in a public-house, and the second that I entered the place I spotted my man. One ought of course to say that 'an indefinable something about him smacked of the sea', but in point of fact he looked like the managing clerk to an old-established firm of family lawyers—English all over, very square cut and groomed, if you know what I mean. In a pub like that any one would have picked him out in a minute. And when I heard him speaking about the flood-tide and getting over the bar I guessed in a second what he was and asked him point-blank where he was going. Sailing at eight-thirty sharp, he was, and for just across the bay about four hours away. And, yes, if I liked, I could come along. Miles out of my way it would be, and he did not know that at midnight I should find a bed. But that was my business, and, if I liked, eight-thirty sharp.

Actually I was on board about seven, with half the town watching me enviously from the little wharf, and before the grimy gang had the last ton of coal off her I think the whole population must have turned up. It was not as though they were

a community cut off from the world, for they had a railway, as well as motor-buses running to quite a sizable town. But as far as their all-but-silted-up harbour went they might get a little coasting steamer like this perhaps four or five times a year, and the rest of the months the river would be all but empty. Quite an event we were. What startled me on going aboard was finding two young women there. Ladies they were, and at a guess they might have been the owner's daughters, amusing themselves with a summer-time trip in charge of a trusted skipper. Bit of a sketching tour, perhaps. I saw one trying to rough out the queer old harbour. Anyway, they were the real thing, right enough, and though I expect they would have said that they were dressed in rags, London was written all over them. Every time one of them came up on the tiny bridge you could see the Irish girls on the river-bank staring at her without seeming to look, if you know what I mean. But I did not see any one reporting my trousers. 'Waists Being Worn Larger this Year.' I do not think it went down in the social jottings column of the local paper.

You would never think what manœuvring there is to get even a little steamer out of a harbour like that. Next to nothing comes into the place, and so there are no dues, and so the local board has no money for dredging, and so next to no ships can

get in. It all goes round in a vicious circle. There are scores of semi-derelict little ports all along the Irish coast. This one certainly looked wide enough, but as far as I could make out there is only about an inch of water to spare, and even then you must catch the tide almost to the very second. I was watching the captain's face, and he was more lawyer's-managing-clerky and more British and brushed than ever. Not a bit of shouting or sailor's language like you would think there would be, but very prim and precise, exactly as if he was drawing up a particularly ticklish conveyance.

I was watching the Irish pilot too, and he was worth the watching. There is one bit of that river where you have to make the ship almost do a side-step, and when you get the particular inch of the bar you want you literally scrape the keel through the sand. I could feel the tiny jar. The pilot kept twiddling the wheel as though he was playing a specially delicate piece on the piano. I was watching his eyes. Almost as if he knew every separate wave. He was not in the least the conventional pilot of the pictures. No trim reefer jacket and peaked cap business. He was a tall, gaunt old man, and he had no cap at all and his coat was torn. A couple of pounds, I suppose, would be about our worth to him, and then he might get half a dozen double turns in the year.

Between times I suppose he would be a fisherman. But the little English skipper deferred to him as though he had been an admiral. The girls, too, as soon as they knew they might talk (for they had been on board quite long enough to know when to keep their mouths shut), they could not have been more civil either. It was 'Mr. Pilot this,' and 'Mr. Pilot that,' all the time. Ladies, I told you they were. And you could see the old man liked it. And then one of them happened to say something about 'Leaving us soon now, Mr. Pilot,' and I thought he was going to cry. I could just see his face in the edge of the shaded light from that lamp thing on the bridge. 'It is you that leave me, marm,' he said, 'and they always leave me. And I wish indeed that I was coming.' Of course she laughed and told him that was only his Irish politeness and he did not really mean it. 'But indeed and I do mean it, marm,' he said. 'Indeed and I would give anything to come.' (From where I was I could see his face and I believed him.)

She told him that he would not like England and its cities after his river and its quiet. 'But, marm,' he said, 'I would go anywhere. If only I could see something. Indeed and I mean it.' Just then we picked up his boat. No side-ladder and motor-launch, you know. Just a clumsy, lop-sided sort of thing, with two rough-looking men tugging at oars. Sidling out of the darkness, she

seemed to hesitate for just a minute underneath the ship's low deck, and at the exact second the old pilot simply jumped. And that was all. The little skipper tugged at his whistle-wire for three toots of 'Good-bye', and as off we steamed one could just see the old boy standing up and waving frantically as his boat waddled away into the darkness of the shore.

'What a chance,' one of the girls was saying to me, 'for any one who could write.' The mountains, savage-peaked in the distance against the rising moon, a lighthouse flashing on the point, and straight ahead the Atlantic itself: I suppose it all would make a magnificent chance for the right man. But that is not myself. For till she spoke I had hardly noticed the mountains. But I was ever so glad about the skipper tooting.

Round by Ballyshannon and Killybegs I went and so back to Donegal on the little narrow-gauge railway. It was the first time since Athlone that I had taken a train, and I particularly noticed the thing. Its rails are quite near together, only to make itself look like a proper train it has built its carriages out quite wide. And its engine gives a whistle that would almost be a credit to an Atlantic liner. And they had an advertisement that I had not seen before and which I rather liked. 'Travel First Class,' it said, 'and Feel First Class.' And then it went on to tell you for how very little extra

you could get that first-class feeling. But I could not quite understand its fares. They are not standardized in Ireland like at home. For in some places you only pay a penny a mile, two-thirds of the price marked on the ticket. That, I expect, is where there is omnibus competition. And then on some lines you pay extra for travelling on an express, like they do on the Continent. Even railway travelling in Ireland can be joyously foreign.

When I got out at Donegal I asked some one for a decent pub. Not that they generally have signs like ours, but pass under their owners' names. And then for the first time in Ireland I ran into a curious thing—that there was a Catholic hotel and a Protestant hotel. I do not suppose of course that either of them would have carried their principles so far as to refuse good money, but the general idea was the Catholics on the whole would use one house and Protestants the other. Only it made me rather wonder what on earth was the persuasion of, say, the Archway Tavern at the top of the Holloway Road in London. And the little point made me see that I was approaching the border-line that divides the two Irelands.

So far politics had hardly entered at all into my view. It is true that all over the west you will see notices about 'Uphold the Republic', and that the 'Up D.V.' of Mr. de Valera's supporters seems almost as common as the 'W. il D.' for 'Viva il

Duce' which you will see all over southern Italy. But then I could not tell how new the de Valera notices might be, and in any case it had not been my business. Then, too, it had all been so curiously mixed up to English notions. At home in Hornsey, of course, I do take an intelligent interest in politics. Every election time my member sends me a card to remind me of his name and I go out and vote against him, and then forget the name again till next time. It is all absolutely clear-cut. But here it was different. As you pass under the railway bridge that crosses the road near Oranmore, for instance, you will see painted up above your head the Irish flag. Now, when they took the trouble to get up there to do it, it must have been the Republican colours. Only then later on it became adopted by the Free State. All mixed up, the whole business seemed to be. The one point that stuck out in my English memory about this flag was a tale some one told me. That when the Irish Fishery Protection gunboat wanted to make an arrest of an erring trawler she had to hoist the White Ensign, like a policeman putting on his official armlet. Otherwise the trawler would not recognize the Irish flag's authority. I do not know whether it was true or not, but I remembered the tale all right.

Now, however, it was pretty plain that politics were going to count. Donegal, I noticed, called

its town square the ' Diamond ', and I remembered seeing that word somewhere before. It was in a history book, and it had something to do with the beginning of the Orange movement And about the only other thing that off-hand I remember about Donegal at the moment was that it was there that I saw the most drunken man I had seen in all Ireland.

I had been a bit surprised about it. Of course, according to all the books the Irish are a thoroughly drunken people, and then all through the country I had only seen about three people drunk. And they had all been elderly men. The truth is that the younger generation are growing up almost a teetotal race. Half the young men that you see coming out of Mass from any Catholic church wear a little badge which means that they are ' Pioneers ' pledged to abstinence. And the old tale about the Irish perpetually taking the pledge and then breaking it next day does not function. Because I believe you have to be two whole years on probation before they will let you wear that twopenny badge. And I imagine that the same sort of movement is taking place with the Protestant churches too. Anyway, the Ireland that I saw was about as sober as a nation could be.

But I did notice that the three or four men who *were* drunk were far more drunk than they could ever have got at home. The whole licensing system

seemed different. I do not know if any reader has ever been in an English public-house, but if he has he may have noticed that when he asks for a glass of beer the barmaid automatically gives a glance into his eyes as she serves him. And that is not in the very least because she admires his eyes, but because our system forces her to satisfy herself of his legal sobriety. In Ireland they seemed to take it for granted that the man would be sober. If he was not that was his look-out. So at least it seemed to me. Again, when our system says that a public-house shall be closed it is closed, and all that you and I can do for an illicit drink is to join a bogus club established for the express purpose of defeating the law in as legal a way as possible. But in rural Ireland it seemed perfectly easy to get a drink during the prohibited hours of their Sunday closing. Against this, on the other hand, they certainly were fairly strict about closing at the proper hour at night, and when I once pointed this out to a publican he gave me a curious explanation. 'In the old days,' he said, 'if I was found serving an hour after time the English magistrate would laugh and fine me half a crown. Nowadays if I am caught serving ten minutes after time the Irish magistrate will not laugh and will fine me five pounds.' I do not know if it was true, but I am absolutely certain that his next remark was not. 'You would almost think,' he said, 'that

the English wished us to be a drunken people and the easier to rule.' With all their niceness and politeness, you kept running into traces of bitterness like that. There was one picture I saw somewhere, of Easter 1916 in the Dublin Post Office, with the Irish all dying nicely and heroically inside, and the brutal English soldiers thoroughly enjoying themselves outside throwing bombs. But I have been a brutal English soldier with other people shooting at me, and I do not remember that I enjoyed myself at all. And then there was a man who in casual conversation with me referred to a date as about the time that he must have been in prison. And in the papers you will see memorial notices about So-and-So, beloved son of So-and-So, shot on such-and-such a date, not 'at Arras' or 'on the Somme', but in such-and-such an English prison. It struck me that while they were as friendly as possible to the Englishman some of these people rather disliked England. And meant with all their hearts and souls to keep on disliking her.

Out of Donegal I took to the road again, tramping right inland and across some enormous hills. For miles and miles there was not a human soul to be seen, only an occasional flock of sheep up in the far distance, white against the purple heather of the bog. It kept raining in an oddly perplexing fashion, first pouring in a perfect storm that would

wet me through, and then before I had my raincoat properly out of my pack clearing up into a warm sunshine that made me want to stow the thing away again. I got rather sick of it after the first few hours, and was glad when in the end I did stumble upon a human habitation. I think it was a shepherd's cottage, and they were doing something with the sheep. They had been rounded up from so many miles round, and were penned in a sort of stone enclosure, and they were letting them out one by one into another enclosure. There was a gentleman there who may have been the owner. Or perhaps he was the expert buyer for one of the great English firms. But to those sheep he must have stood as God on Judgement Day. He was wearing perfect English clothes with the fisherman's wader things to protect them from the filth, and there he would stand in the middle of all those hundreds of sheep and point out with a stick this, that, or the other one that he wanted. And then the dogs with a sort of superhuman intelligence would go and fetch the thing as it was wedged into the frightened, struggling mass. I watched them for ever so long. Only it all struck me as such an unfair judgement from the sheeps' point of view. For it was the good and virtuous living sheep that were being picked out to start on the long, hard road that in a week's time would end in the shambles. The bad sheep who had buried his

talents and neglected his duty of getting fat was being sent back to glorious freedom on the mountain-side bog.

The place that I was making for all this time was Lough Derg, the famous pilgrimage centre that I had heard of back in Dublin. The 'season' was over now, and with permission there was nothing to prevent me from going on to the island that they had told me of as 'the most Irish thing in Ireland'. And by next morning I had got there. It is about five miles from the nearest village, and along an uncommonly lonely road. And then quite suddenly you turn a corner and see the place.

The Lough according to English ideas is not at all tiny, but is a very big lake indeed, quite two miles or so across, I suppose. And in it are several islets. Most of them are just covered with trees and are uninhabited, but on one of the islands you see a sort of cathedral with an enormous dome on it and a great golden cross flashing on the top. In that place there, with the great mountains towering up all around and all absolutely barren and without a sign of life, it looks most extraordinary. The pilgrimage business dates back for untold centuries, but the cathedral place is new, being indeed hardly finished even yet. A hundred thousand pounds it cost to build, they say, and one would think there must have been gangs of workmen and tons of machinery and all that. And now, when the

pilgrim season had closed to the hour on what Ireland calls the Feast of the Assumption and what we know in England as the fifteenth of August, there was nothing but the mountains and the water and the cross. It all seemed almost uncanny, a bit like a picture of an enchanted castle there used to be in my old *Grimm's Fairy Tales* book of forty years ago. It came as a positive relief to catch sight of the name on an old crane standing on the wharf of the mainland jetty. It was made in Chorley, Lancs.

By and by a man who was working at something on the island came across in a little boat, and when he found that my permission from the Prior was all right he let me go back with him. The big boats of course that they use for pilgrims (a hundred and fifty one of them holds, and sometimes it may take twelve boatmen to row it. The biggest rowing-boat in the world, they say it is) were all laid up for the winter, and this was ever such a little thing. It took us quite a time to reach the island. Real waves there were, and with the winds rushing down the mountain-sides it must be quite rough when a storm comes on. One thing I particularly noticed as we crossed: the water was really inky-black. I do not know why, but it was. Perhaps from coming from the bogs. But anyway, it seemed all in keeping. For Lough Derg is not a cheerful place.

From the little I heard I do not think that it is meant to be. My boatman was not a conversationalist, but he did speak once or twice. I mentioned, for instance, that I knew Lourdes a little. 'Lourdes,' he said, 'that must be a place for desperate cures. But here, this is a place for desperate penance.' I never knew before that boatmen spoke like that. They do not at Maidenhead and such-like places. When we landed the feeling of astonishment grew. For there is next to nothing of that island left. This little church and that big church and another place that makes up a temporary church for exceptional crowds, and the men's hostel and the women's hostel and the places where they register your name and all that —for you cannot walk on to Lough Derg and make it a pleasure outing—it takes up about all the island there is. Parts of the churches and places, in fact, they have had to build out on piles right in the Lough itself. About all of the natural island that they have left is a very rocky bit indeed, where so many times a day, as they marshal the crowds, you can go round and round so often on your bare knees, after of course spending the night in vigil in the huge, bare church. And then the man showed me with pride the up-to-date arrangements that they had installed for feeding as many people as possible with their one meal a day of black tea and black bread. But the season, this

year, he said, had been exceptionally poor. Barely twelve thousand people, in fact, had been found to walk or pay their fares from all over Ireland to visit the place. As he rowed me back in almost silence across the inky water—and for his two miles row he wanted nothing at all; nor would he take anything—the crane on the little jetty stood up refreshingly home-like. Chorley, Lancs. I kept saying it to myself over and over again. One had to say something to convince oneself that England was only a few hours away.

What did I really think of Ireland, some one later asked me? And I told him that what I thought was that Ireland was absolutely the most Catholic country that I had ever seen. I do not of course know many, only Belgium and France and Italy, but as far as I could see no possible doubt existed upon the point. Dublin, Galway, Sligo, Tuam, Waterford, I visited the cathedrals in each of them, and as things happened I visited each upon an ordinary weekday. And each one was full. Not just a couple of dozen people of the leisured classes, but crowds of just everybody—workmen, out-of-works, clerks, every one. And all the churches seemed always open, even to quite latish at night. And then there are all sorts of other things that all pointed the same way. In Ballyshannon, I think it was, a publican asked me if I had seen their local Holy Well, and then

practically insisted upon showing me the way to it. It was not as if I had not been perfectly sober and he was wanting to get rid of me! But here was an ordinary public-house keeper positively turning away potentially profitable custom for the sake of his pride in a Holy Well! I remember the place, because it had something to do with St. Patrick, and in the rock there was a mark rather like a footprint. And I believe that scholars had advanced all sorts of theories about it. Only, as far as I could make out, each scholar's theory rather upset the others', so that none of them quite held water. On the other hand, the footprint *did* hold water, because I drank some of it. There is a little mug there with two Dutch figures painted on it, and I imagine that it may have come from Mr. Woolworth's. I suppose it would be a theory too revolutionary if one suggested that the mark might really have been the Saint's footprint. Only I remembered the place, because I had never heard of an English bartender who would turn away custom for the sake of a well where a Saint was supposed once to have halted for a drink of water.

And it was the same sort of thing all the way. They not only went to church, but they said extraordinary things which rather made one think that they believed in church. One man, I know, sitting in an office, was telling me about some

celebrations there had been in Dublin. And they were awfully afraid that it was going to rain and spoil everything. 'So,' he said, 'they just turned on some of the Nuns to pray that it might keep fine.' (And, by the way, it was fine.) But he said it just as if he had been talking about engineering and switching on more power. And I suppose that if you look at it this way you might say that all Ireland is dotted with spiritual power-houses, for you will find a great monastery or convent building in almost every townlet.

Then there was a most extraordinary tale which I was hearing all over Ireland about a man called Matt Talbot. And the tale, putting it very roughly indeed, was this. Here was an ordinary Dublin workman who very early one morning fell down in the street and was picked up dead. And when at the mortuary they came to undress the body they found that under the clothes it was wrapped round with chains that had eaten right into the flesh. The chains were a little rusty, but otherwise the body was spotlessly clean. They then began to investigate into the man's history. And this was what they found. For years and years he had been a sort of dock labourer, only not in casual work but employed by one firm all the time. He had been a perfectly ordinary labourer, earning fifteen shillings a week before the War and rather more after it. They were able to

find foremen and clerks of the firm who could remember all about the man. And the extraordinary thing was that there was so little to remember. He had not been in the very least the religious fanatic of ordinary understanding—no glaring eyes or anything of that sort and no wild speeches. He very seldom spoke at all, in fact, but simply attended to his work. About the only thing peculiar was at the midday knock-off. For when the others would sit about and eat the workman's lunch that they had brought this man would withdraw himself to a little shed where, as they found out afterwards, he used to spend his hour in praying. Nobody thought him a little mad or 'touched' or anything, because he simply was not. Only the others did say that he always seemed 'withdrawn', as if he lived in another world. As a matter of fact, he cannot have had much interest in this one, because it was not till a year or so after the start of the War that he even heard about it. With whatever o'clock Dublin labourers stop work this man's day really began. And with infinite trouble and questioning his landlady and all sorts of people they began to piece together his real life. He slept on a bare plank, only over it he had drawn a rug so as not to let it look conspicuous. And on this plank he went to bed nightly for years at ten to the second. And at two in the morning he was up again. And,

barring the briefest interval for one meal, the whole of the rest of his hours he spent in various forms of prayer and devotion. The very first weekday Mass in Dublin was at four in the morning, or something like that, and it was there where he was going when he died. And, by the way, they found that out of his fifteen shillings a week he had saved enough money to do something wonderful to a hospital.

Now this story is no medieval legend. The thing happened only a couple of years or so ago. And as far as human effort, detective research, and all that can possibly go, the story is true line by line and word by word. And there was nothing in the world extraordinary about the man. He was not a screaming fanatic or somebody a trifle deranged but an excellent workman. And all Ireland is rather wondering whether it has not here a modern-day instance of a rare saint. And none of Ireland thinks the thing particularly extraordinary. Personally, I should say that it *is* a distinctly Catholic country!

But its Catholicism is not in the very least the apparently lighthearted business that I had seen in France and the other places. I remember meeting in a country motor-bus an American rather airing his views about the backwardness of Ireland. Even the girls, he said, were old-fashioned. Only the week before he had found one of sixteen years

old who had never smoked a cigarette. He was hours in persuading her to try a puff, and very amusing, according to him, the little experience must have been. 'And I hope,' said a man at the other end of the bus, 'that you may go to Hell for it.' And I am certain that he meant it. And he was quite an ordinary man, not a priest or anything. He might have been a commercial traveller working the small towns by bus.

As, my visit to Lough Derg over, I found my way back to an inn, there was an English tourist stopping there. He had a few paper-back books with him and lent me one. And as there was nothing else to do I spent the evening reading it. All about Ireland it was, with delightfully funny people rushing about and calling each other a 'broth of a bhoy' and things like that. A really humorous book it seemed to me.

CHAPTER EIGHT

IN the spot where I now found myself it became necessary to take a turn one way or the other. On my coming to Ireland no instructions of any sort had been given me. But there had been a qualification that by 'Ireland' they meant the Free State. The part of Ulster that they call the 'Six Counties' was not to fall within my purview at all. Why, I do not know, but presumably on the idea that the man who might be ideal for Southern Ireland would conceivably be quite the wrong man for Northern Ireland. As indeed I should think might be possible. But, anyway, it was my job to turn south again.

Meanwhile, being in a border village, it might be possible to pick up useful copy. The two parties, I knew, lived in bitterest enmity, Catholics and Protestants, Free Staters and Ulstermen, each jealous of the slightest movement of the opposition which might even threaten their rights. As a matter of fact, I had felt the change of atmosphere as far away as a couple of days' journey back. There were some Belfast motor-buses whose time-table maps I had seen stuck up, and nothing more uncompromising could have been devised. In great lines the routes ran all over Northern Ireland,

and then as they reached a line on the map there was an ominous blank. On the southern side of the line marked 'Boundary' there was simply nothing, neither routes nor towns nor roads nor anything else. It was not even as if they had drawn pictures of imaginary castles or fabulous monsters. To those Belfast bus directors the whole of the South of Ireland was simply a blank. In its rugged northern obstinacy it seemed rather a wonderful idea, and I was a little shocked to find that really the buses ran well south of the line, just as far, in fact, as they could pick up pennies to make themselves pay! Then there had been a priest that I had met somewhere else, and he too had come as something of a revelation to me. I had noticed that while we stood talking only about three out of four of the people who passed saluted him, and from that I had gathered that we must be in a town of dangerous heresies and infidelities. But when I put it to his reverence he said quite cheerfully that in his opinion it was not a bad thing to have just a very few Protestants about the place. Just a few, of course. Quite good people they mostly were, and very regular in attendance at their own places. And their example served to shame any bad Catholics there might happen to be amongst his own flock. It seemed at least a point of view worth noting.

Here in this border village the map showed the

actual frontier to be a river. There were two bridges, and when I went over one of them nothing in the world happened. So I turned to the other, and still nothing happened. Not a soul even shot at me. I walked quite a way too, every minute expecting a sharp challenge from at least somebody, until in the end I got sick of it and walked back again. And then there was not even a picket on the Free State side either. In the middle of the bridge was an almost illegible notice about 'Ulster and Free State Boundary' (and it seemed to me a gross injustice. Alphabetically it should have been the other way round), and that was all there was. For all that, it was the famous frontier. For I asked the landlady at the inn about it, and there was a real customs house too, only she thought that at this time it would be closed. Really, this boundary set up between two gallant races irreconcilably and eternally opposed in faith and policy seemed to me to be losing a little of its terror.

In the evening I attended an Ulster fête. My landlord took me. 'I suppose, then, that you are an Ulsterman?' I asked him. 'But indeed I am not,' he indignantly replied. 'It is a Catholic that I am. But they are good enough people, and the fête is for the repair of their church. And a shilling or so, what is it? It is a fine old church anyway.' This seemed scarcely the atmosphere

of bitter hate and suspicion I had been expecting, and I said so. And he went on, in my opinion, most blasphemously. 'We will be hearing,' he said, 'a lot of fine speeches. But they mean nothing. No more than what they put in the newspapers. We are all friends together nowadays.' It seemed most peculiar to me.

We did go to the Ulster fête, and there was a band. The famous Orange Drums, I supposed. But when I asked the landlord he did not understand what I meant. It was the village band, and it played impartially on either side of the boundary. The lads just liked playing. And we did hear some speeches. A gentleman pointed to the Union Jack and said that nobody under any circumstances whatever would be allowed to pass one foot over the line. And we all clapped. Only I wondered about it, because I had already passed his frontier several times that afternoon. Still, it was no business of mine.

My own job was to get down south again, and as I did not see walking twice over the same ground I proposed taking the train for a change. Rather a job it seemed to be, unless you wanted to go round by Dublin, and some one suggested that if I really wanted to know the quickest way to the south the easiest thing would be to inquire of the Ulster police sergeant. He was a south of Ireland man, it appeared, and often went to his home down

there. I could not be missing his house, now. Just over the bridge it was, where an old notice in tarred letters said, 'Long Live the Republic.' And while I was joking with the sergeant about it one of his presumably official enemies came in and started joking too. 'Do not worry about me,' I said, 'I am only an Englishman.' But I shall never be sure which of them echoed me first. My impression was that they both spoke at once.

I had always read, of course, that the boundary constituted an absolute line of social demarcation. To the north, of course, stood equity and order, hard work and all that, coupled perhaps with a certain rugged grimness that made for lack of the lighter graces. To the south was superstition, idleness, and a general slipshod habit of mind, only perhaps relieved by a certain Celtic romance, which, while doubtless attractive, was totally without practical value. But now I am not at all certain that the line operates so absolutely as the newspaper writers said it did. For while I was waiting for the train I had a walk round the village, and there discovered the most absolutely ruinous habitation that would even fifty years ago have been condemned in a London slum. It was, by the way, on the northern (or practical utility) side of the boundary.

An an expedient for enabling two sets of police, two sets of customs officers, two sets of postal

officials to live together in perfect harmony, this frontier idea struck me as about as fine a notion as could have been devised, and a statesman with sufficient imagination to set up frontiers and plenty of them in England might solve the unemployment question. But as a fierce boundary of ancient hates the thing struck me personally as a bit of a failure.

But I may of course have been wrong, in which case it was probably a judgement upon me that I ran into a Free State customs house half an hour later on the train. It is true that I had started from a Free State station and that I was booked to a Free State station. But as in my half-hour's journey the train had passed through about two inches of Northern Irish territory, the customs business became obligatory. And it is a nuisance with a pack filled mostly with shamefully dirty shirts. Once I had tried sending them home, and I spent ever so long in a post office filling up the proper declaration for the English customs. And then they went and lost the parcel in the post.

Back at Sligo again, I started off for the real south, by train this time. You leave Sligo (which was the only station I ever saw with all the notices in Gaelic) soon after twelve, and by sitting in the same train without a change it is possible to reach Limerick just before nine the same night. And I sincerely hope that it may keep fine for you. It

did not for me, and I am not 'helping God' (which I find a beautiful term for 'exaggerating') in the least when I say that it was the most miserable day that I spent in all Ireland. With the rain from the roof above pouring down over the windows in a perfect little cascade, the flat, deserted countryside presented a perfect picture of abject misery. And then at some little wretched hole of a station the entire platform was thick with people standing hopelessly in the downpour. They were not all passengers, as it turned out. Only half a dozen or so were travelling, and the rest had come to see them off. Emigrants, one could see they were from their kits and things, and it seemed to me one of the most wretched sights that I had ever seen. They were crying, some of them, men as well as women, and I saw two lads kiss one another. I had seen the same thing down on the little mountain railways of southern Italy when a draft of the conscription was leaving its village. But I had never known that it happened in these northern islands. Dead sober everybody was, only just miserable and unhappy. And it made me feel ashamed to be staring at them. There seemed a perfect tragedy in this youth of a country having to leave its own land to seek a living in far America, and I said so to a man sitting in my carriage. But, he told me, it was not to America that they were going, but only to Manchester in my own England.

Only to them England would be a country as far off and pagan as Central Africa. And to me, who had always looked upon London as the centre of the world with everybody outside it fighting to get there, the idea came as quite a new one.

I believe, however, that the man was speaking the truth, for I met the same notion elsewhere. It was a young woman I was talking to, and she told me about her being a famous London film star. Only when I said that I was on the movies too, and was it not a nuisance about the way our admirers were always dragging us off to the Savoy, she changed her mind, and it came out that really she had been in the drapery until somebody had died and they had brought her home again to help in the family grocery-cum-farm-cum-public-house. A bit of rough luck, it seemed to me, giving a girl like that just a glimpse of life and then bringing her back to remotest Ireland with no cinemas or chocolates or best boys. Until it came out that she was uncommonly glad to be home again and that she had cried every night she had been away. But I do not know that the casual tramp has any business to generalize, for against this I saw few people who had been in America and then come back to settle in Ireland. To see the old country and the old people, yes. But then back to America and the dollars. I noticed this, because I had once been in Calabria of southern Italy and

it seemed all different there. Every village had its returned Americo-Italians. When they had made a little money, back they came to Italy.

In course of hours—only it seemed days—the train came to Tuam, and as the guard announced that it was going to stop there for ever so long I got out. And at first I thought that I had made a find. There is a book that I had once read years before called *Priests and People in Ireland*, and opposite the title-page it has a picture of a church with an enormous spire towering over some rather mean little cottages. The idea of course is supposed to be that the steeple and all the treasure under it has been wrung by an unscrupulous priesthood from the pennies of an impoverished people. And here, as far as I could see from the train carriage window, was the very steeple. And off I went to look at it. But I was all wrong. Three times did I walk round that great church without finding a door open, and then it dawned upon me that it was the wrong place. It was the Protestant cathedral. The Catholic one is at the other end of the town, and it has not got any particular steeple, and its doors are unlocked. So where the steeple of the book is I still do not know. But I never saw it in the parts of the country I went through.

And by the time I got to Limerick, in the dark, I was so tired and wet that I went straight inside

the first public-house I found and stopped there the night without going out again. And the only point of interest about the place was its cat. 'McGilligan', they called it, because it appeared they had a gentleman customer of that name who was always thirsty and used to follow strangers about telling them what a dreadful thing it was. And they said that the cat did the same thing, only with milk. But it seemed to me a silly name. Ours at home is called 'James', and she is a much finer cat and her kittens are much in request.

And next morning I was off and out again on the train, so really I saw nothing of Limerick at all, for I wanted to get on towards Waterford. My point was that I had been down that way before. And barring a month or so that as a Tommy towards the end of the War I had spent in a convalescent camp up in the far north, my visit to this place was the only time that ever before now I had been in Ireland at all. And I wanted for my own purposes to make a comparison.

All through Ireland I had been hearing that with the glories of the new régime there was another and less pleasant side to the picture. Once it had been a parson that I had met, and he had almost spat at the very name of England. We had, he said, let him and his down as badly as could be conceived. And then I had heard of some officials at Dublin. Their appointments had dated back

to the old days, and under the new government times were not so happy for them. There was a picture in one inn that I stopped at, with a frame full of newspaper cuttings of a bygone age. Sir Somebody This and Captain the Honourable That, and the wonderful runs that they had with this, that, and the other pack of hounds. And one can imagine how in those days the inn stables must have echoed with the clatter of horses' hooves, and how the inn's twisted passages would be full of serving-men and maids with tankards for the quality folk. And when I was there I think that I was the only customer. Politics were not my business, but any fool could see that there must have been another side, and that the change could not be for the profit of everybody. Minorities, one fears, must suffer. The English Army, people kept telling me, has gone. And when it went, it took the Paymaster with it.

Now down somewhere between Limerick and Waterford there was a place that as a child I used to know. It obviously is not fair to give its name, but I remember how I used to come to it, crossing from Liverpool on a ship called the *Dunbrody*. Its funnel was much thinner than they have them to-day, and it must all have been a long time ago. In forty years I am afraid that they will have broken the ship up, but I was very fond of her once, and one of her sailors who smelled oddly of

what I now know to be beer promised me that he would teach me how to turn into a real ship's captain. But he never kept his word.

My memories of course of the journey and the place were ever so scrappy. There were the two great families, I know, and a Church of Ireland clergyman and a doctor and an agent. They were English, and if their families included any little boys one was allowed to play with them. But of the thousand or so other souls in the townlet one knew nothing at all. They were all right in their way of course, and with proper training and discipline could sometimes even be turned into quite passable gardeners and nurses and the like. And in some extraordinary way they even cropped up in family prayers, when one besought the Almighty that in some miraculous fashion He might be able to do something with them. But it all seemed rather doubtful and a bit hopeless. For they were the Irish. One knew them as one passed through the shabby little streets, for they would curtsy or touch their hats. And I remember even at the age of seven blasphemously wondering whether when our backs were turned they did not spit at us. It was odd to come back to the place again after all these years.

There had been the two great men. One was a sportsman and he spent money and drove a four-in-hand, with a curse and a careless shilling for all

who got in his road. Once, I know, he jokingly flicked me with his long whip, and then pulled up and apologized as one gentleman to another. It had been a mistake. He had not seen that I was English. His house, now, I saw, was a convent of some Sisterhood, and there would be no clatter of coach-and-four, and the shillings would be careful.

Then, as I came to the other house, I saw that its great gates were padlocked. The lodge still stood, and a woman with a brood of children came out and stared at me. And what might be my business? And as I told her, she undid a little tradesman's gate and let me in by the side way. As I passed through the great empty stable-yard it seemed a ghostland of memories. Twenty-six horses there had once been here, and I had known the most of their names. In the silence I seemed to be listening for the champing of their bits. Through a bit of a shrubbery where once I had played at Indians and scalp-hunters, and I was in the huge gardens. Their general lay-out came back to me with curious correctness, but there was a something that I vaguely missed, and its absence somehow worried me, even while I could not remember what it was. And while I paced uneasily here and there, quite suddenly I all but fell into it. Half-left of the great front door and sunken in a lawn had been a little ornamental pond with gold-fish in it. I remembered now quite well.

Once I had fallen into it, and had been whipped for spoiling my new sailor-suit. And here it was again. Only the lawn was more like a rough hay-field, and the marble edging of the little pond was all grown up with moss and grass. The gold-fish were dead this many a year.

The house was just the same, a man told me. He was making hay on what had once been a croquet lawn. He opened it every day or so just to let the air through. It was no good to anybody —a barrack that would want its score or so of indoor servants, and nowadays nobody could afford to keep it up. It was true, I thought, that they had taken the Paymaster with them! The old days might return, of course, and the place be wanted again to live in. Meantime he just let the air through it. The lawyers sent him the bit of money, and every year or two a clerk gentleman would come over to have a look at the place. I was welcome now, if I wished, to look through it. But somehow I did not wish. And so turned away through the acres of empty grounds.

As once more I came to the lodge, they were waiting there for me now. There was an old, old woman that they had brought to see me. She remembered, she remembered, she said. This head-butler and that head-coachman, and this name and that. And in a terrible low pitch of awful monotone the voice went on and on without

expression or hope, in barren recital of the years that were gone.

Once I saw 'Everyman' at the Old Vic in the Waterloo Road, and in an instant remembered the dreadful evenness of the Voice as it slowly sank down into its grave. And suddenly it came to me that this voice was the same, as of one speaking almost from the dead. In a way, I suppose it was the same. An echo from the grave of an Ireland that has for ever passed.

CHAPTER NINE

ACCORDING to the guide-book Tramore is the Margate of Ireland, and I am bound to say that it seemed to me a silly way of putting it. After all, we should not like it if they described London merely as the 'Paris of England'; and besides, it would not be true. So at first I did not mean to go to the place. Only when a commercial gentleman in the Waterford hotel told me he had been the Sunday before, and how he had found the gambling there simply fierce, I decided that this was the sort of thing that ought to be shown up. And besides, I might be luckier myself.

They allow betting, of course, in Ireland, and in every little town you will find the licensed bookmaker's office. It had seemed to me a little shocking at first, this open recognition of a grave social evil, and I was not sure that I did not prefer my own way of putting on my occasional shilling. Our way at home hurts nobody. My own man, for instance, always seems in some mysterious way to have an uncanny prescience when the police are going to raid his yard. And that day, of course, he is careful to stand up a tout with no previous convictions against him. So that he can only be fined ten shillings. But there seemed

something wicked in allowing the thing openly. And Tramore I understood would be even worse, with public gaming tables.

You get there from Waterford on the jolliest little railway in the world, with carriages some of which have got no sides to them. Our English lines seem always to be grumbling about the falling off of traffic, but I am certain that if they would try some such novelty as resurrecting rolling-stock of the 'fifties, all the country would rush to patronize the new experiment. Those Tramore trains were packed. When you get out you run straight into a fun fair, and being a Sunday afternoon the thing was in full swing. There was an electric affair going round and round, with scores of place-names marked out and money figures marked against each. Some of the places were real First League names like Everton or Burnley, but some were only League of Nations names like Turkey or Italy. And as the thing swung round the light flashed quick as anything up and down the lists. You bought a ticket with a name on, and then hoped that when the affair stopped the lights would be against your particular place and a decently large figure on the money side. As it was, Burnley came up, and with only nine-and-fivepence to come. This form of open gaming seemed to me rather disgusting, and I passed on to the next attraction. This was a line

of those machines like we often see in London. Only at home, of course, they are illegal and generally about once a year the police raid them just to show that they jolly well are illegal. But here they were quite proper, and I even saw a priest watching the crowd round one. You know the things of course, with their little disks of painted fruit. You have to get three melons in a row, and it is worth so much. Or two apples and a bad banana are worth so much else. I was watching one young mother. Some one had given her little girl a penny, and the child could not reach the slot until mother lifted her up. To me there seemed something bestial in the gambling lust in the eyes of that little one. Just then the machine, in return for about six shillings' worth of coppers with which I had been steadily feeding it, unexpectedly returned me eightpence, together with a bit of wholly gratuitous prophecy printed on the cardboard as the dial quivered to its standstill. 'You will,' it said, 'shortly be taking a journey.' So I started on it at once, walking out of the booth before the machine changed its mind about my eightpence.

As you go down to the front you pass on the one side a dancing-place and on the other an enclosure where a gentleman was kindly giving a free variety show and in between the turns selling various articles of *virtu* such as bazaar dolls, shell

pin-cushions, and the like. The songs were free, but not of course the dolls. And so you push your way through to the front itself, and, as I thought, it was not a bit like Margate. There is a Metal Man in the distance where the North Foreland lighthouse ought to be. It is a statue on the top of a pillar, and I suppose it was built for a landmark to ships. But its real use is that if you hop three times round it standing on one foot you get a husband within the year. That is, of course, if you are a lady. And then of course there is the sea all right, just like at Margate, and the bathers and the seats and the promenade. But it is the promenade that is different. Up and down it stroll the parties, and youth and beauty flaunt their flannels and complexions. But they never glance at one another. There are no turnings round at Tramore, no backward glances, no hesitations, no giggling pairings-off. There simply is not anything at all of all that. Gambling—on the penny scale—as much as you like till you fairly clog the machine up with coppers; strong drink, as chiefly expressed in terms of stout, a little, providing that under not too severe cross-examination you can bring yourself to put up a passable lie about being a 'traveller'. But of the other thing in the Margate sense, 'all the fun of the feminine fair,' it no more exists at Tramore than it seems to exist anywhere else in Ireland. Some-

where may be the promiscuous flirtations and 'pickings-up' of the English sea-side town, but where it may be I do not know. For I never found the place.

And while I am at it I might say that the amount of things that I had not found in Ireland was simply astounding. Not once, for instance, at least to my knowledge, had I ever seen a 'Colleen'. The various young ladies that I saw in Ireland looked to me exactly like young ladies anywhere else. In fact, I only saw even the word once, and that was on the placard of an English newspaper. I only once heard 'Girleen' either, and that was as addressed by an obviously English commercial traveller to a barmaid in a Dublin hotel. And as she immediately asked him who he thought he was talking to, and as the poor man did not know, even that bit of hopeful conversation rather languished. Then in all those hundreds of miles I never once saw an Irishman with a pipe stuck in his hat. And I particularly looked out for one. They must do it somewhere, because I had seen in an English paper that this pipe-combination idea made up Ireland's national head-gear. Only somehow I missed it. I never saw any potheen. Once, it is true, a man indicated to me by a wink that he knew where some was to be found, but by another wink, only far more complicated, I indicated back to him that I guessed

it was only methylated spirit imported from England for the benefit of the wealthy tourist. I did, however, talk to a man who had tried the real thing, and it must have been rather exciting. He had drunk, he said, quite a biggish drink, and waited for the results. And nothing happened, so he had another. And as still nothing happened, he tried a third. And then, he said, quite unexpectedly things went out of focus with his eyes, and he saw men walking about as big as giants. And when he woke up about two days later it was like an iron band pressing ever so tightly just round the crown of his head. He pointed to the precise place where it had been, and I asked a doctor about it afterwards, and he said something about inflammation of the nerves at the end of some blood-vessels. And I gathered that, speaking professionally, he rather thought that it was unwise for a stranger to drink three half-tumblers of potheen straight off. But anyway it was a thing I missed.

There were lots of chances that I missed. Roscrea Abbey, for instance, where some monks besides being monks run a sort of agricultural training college that is one of the prides of Ireland. And then there was a gentleman I was given an introduction to. A politician he was, and one of the most corrupt in the country, so the man told me who gave me the letter, and I ought not

to miss the chance of meeting him. There was nothing proud or stuck-up about him. He did not mind seeing people and talking to them. Only, somehow, I did not see my way to using that letter. One simply cannot go to a stranger and say, 'I understand you to be a thoroughly corrupt politician, always ready to sell your vote. And please will you tell me some funny stories about it?' I dare not approach a statesman in England with a request like that, and I did not see how it was to be done in Ireland.

For three weeks or so I did not think that I had done so badly. I have not of course been able to set down here everything I saw, and it has been particularly difficult to avoid places. Any fool can walk through France or Italy and make a book about it, because the chances are a million to one against any of the people ever seeing what he has said about them. But when it comes to Ireland it is all different. When people have been kind to one it is hard to put them afterwards into a book.

Not of course that it had all been perfection. Even the Free State had been unable to bring that about all at once. I doubt if even Mr. de Valera could manage it. There had been rudenesses and unpleasantnesses. There was one little town I went to, I remember, and they were having a flag day for the repair of one of the churches. I do

not know which one it was, Catholic or Protestant. But I know I bought a flag, a yellow one it was, and I gave twopence for it. But when the girl took her little pin-cushion of flags up to some men who were leaning against a wall they used filthy language to her, and the child ran away sobbing. So I ran after her and bought some more flags and charged them up to the paper. Then there was a man I met in a public-house, extraordinarily drunk and telling extraordinarily dirty stories. And after each story he came out with the same sentence: 'As it says in the Fourth Gospel according to St. Vincent de Paul.' And while I was waiting to see what happened, the publican, after thinking it all over very slowly indeed, came round his bar quite quickly indeed and pitched the man out into the muddy road. And then came back wiping his hands. But whether it was for being drunk on licensed premises or for using improper language I do not know. But my own impression was that it was for dragging St. Vincent de Paul into the conversation.

Then there were some people once who were quite rude to me. They were in a bus, half a dozen young men with the high spirits that in London we mostly look for on a Bank Holiday. Only at home public opinion is generally against them, and here it was with them. For the louder they blew through paper trumpets and gave

cat-calls the better pleased every one else seemed to be. Then, seeing me, two of them began a conversation in a comic caricature of an exaggerated English accent. 'Mag-nif-ic-ent scen-ewy, dear old chappie. What! What!' That sort of thing. And then the other fellow would answer back and call his mate 'Major'. And everybody was most awfully amused. Except of course me. Two girls, quite pretty enough to have known better, simply beamed upon the criminals, and a dear old lady next to me nudged me joyously in the ribs at the more poignant hits. When one of the lads held a half-crown in his eye she nearly went into convulsions. And it was most unfair. For I have never worn a monocle in my life. But it was about the only time that any one ever was rude to me. And one thing I particularly noticed about Ireland. By foot, bus, boat, and rail I suppose I covered something over seven hundred miles in my three weeks. And never once did I see an indecency chalked or pencilled upon a wall. It may not be very much of an observation for a traveller to make, but I do know countries where it would have been different. Are we quite free at home? Moryah! Which is Irish for 'I *don't* think'.

Another oddity that I could not help but notice was the way that most unexpected people kept knowing everything about things. I saw, for

instance, some curious caves where prehistoric men once lived, and of all people it was a policeman who took me to them and told me what the scholars had said about it. And then he would not take anything. I thought, of course, that he was born in the place. But he was not. He just happened to be stationed there, and he naturally liked, he told me, to read up everything he could about Ireland. And they all seemed to think that everybody was equally keen on knowledge. So once I was walked to look at an old stone that is supposed to mark the dead centre of Ireland, and I another time was shown the place where Michael Davitt died and another place where Fitzgerald either died or was born. I am not sure which, but then I do not really know quite who Fitzgerald was. But the man who showed me knew all about him. That was why I did not like to ask. Then there was a man in another town who walked me ever so far in the dark to a place where there used to be an old abbey, and he talked all the time about the 'Four Masters'. Who they were I do not exactly know, but it has something to do with the history of Ireland and with some ancient manuscripts. Only I should never have thought that a man like that would have been really keen on ancient manuscripts. But he was. All our books of course describe the Irish as an extraordinarily ignorant nation!

They all seemed like that—as if they knew everything about everything Irish. Not guides at all, or people wanting money to show the stranger things, but quite ordinary Irishmen. Once they told me in an omnibus about a musical bridge that sang, and I thought it would be an ancient tale for the benefit of travellers and children, like our lions in Trafalgar Square stepping down when they hear the clocks strike twelve. But it was not. For by and by we came to the place, and they stopped the bus on purpose to show me the thing. If you take a big stone and run it fast along the bridge's coping it makes a tune like a scale ; I do not know why. But it is rather queer. Then we all got back into the bus again and nobody wanted anything. They had just shown me. And in case anybody wants to know, the bridge is on the road between Belmullet and Ballina, and I think near a place called Bellocorick.

And talking about buses, it was a conductor of one who told me about the medieval history of a place called Cong, where the Irish once had a sort of monastery-university. I do not remember so very much about the medieval monastery part, but I do remember the omnibus conductor all right. He hoped that some day he might have educated himself into the position when he might be able to join the local antiquarian society.

Personally, I could not see that he so much wanted any more education, but then I know very little about antiquarian societies and nothing at all about Cong. But I did once lodge with a London bus conductor, and if he had any archaeological leanings he kept them uncommonly well to himself. It all seemed different in Ireland—almost as though they were proud of being Irish.

It is probably uncharitable, but the older I get the less I find myself able to believe in the Man who Understands Women. In most cases I think it just means that having quarrelled with his wife he simply must come out and talk some nonsense to other men. I had something of this feeling about the people who insisted on telling me how well they understood Ireland. There were so many of them. One little gentleman, for instance, I met somewhere, and he knew every mortal thing that there was to be known about Ireland and the Irish. They did not really want the Free State at all, he told me. It was simply an unpopular innovation forced on to the majority (only he did not explain how) by a tiny and insignificant minority. And he rather hoped that the Shannon scheme might prove a failure. So there! Then there was that other gentleman about whose understanding of Ireland I was only told. He was a distinguished scientist of some brand, and the Government—I mean the old-time British

Government—had sent him over to Ireland to study pre-Celtic skulls (I think they were pre-Celtic; pre-something anyway) under the quite obvious idea that in this way they would be able to arrive at some better understanding of what was inside modern Irish skulls and so triumphantly solve all the problems of Irish government. Rooms were duly secured for the scientific gentleman in the best hotel that they could find in Ireland, and there he slowly and comfortably prosecuted his studies, so arriving in time, of course, at a very complete understanding of Ireland. Only unfortunately the Blue Book in which his labours were incorporated never really became a best seller. Its genuine sales, in fact (exclusive of official and presentation copies), never reached even double figures.

There was still another gentleman I met somewhere. An Englishman he was, but with a complete understanding of the Irish problem. The whole country, he said, ought to be thoroughly submerged under the sea. (It is odd, by the way, that there *is* a prophecy that Ireland will submerge before the end of the world overwhelms the rest of Europe.) All the Irishmen in Ireland ought to be submerged too, he thought. And all the women as well. He added thoughtfully that he had married one of them.

Personally, I do not see how on earth he did it.

For I do not see how any Englishman ever musters up the impudence to propose to one of those Irish girls, with the attitude of calmly aloof superiority that they seem to reserve especially for us. I myself am in the 'forties and a bit shabby and going grey, so of course I do not count anyway. In any case I am much too old for anything of the sort. Besides which I am married. But even if I were young and gay and dashing I do not think that I could ever overcome the problem of proposing to a sort of frozen Venus in marble. I believe that it must be a special attitude that they keep for the English alone. I saw it again and again. There was one girl that I remember in particular. She had on a funny sort of high hat made out of coloured paper, and I imagine that she would be going to some bazaar or something in it. And as she flounced gaily into the inn room where I was eating ham and eggs she called out quite cheerfully to me, 'Now don't I look nice?' 'I am much too old to be a judge, madam,' I said, 'but you know quite well what I think.' 'Don't talk so pound-notey,' said the highly gratified young lady; 'and it's me hat I'm meaning, you fool.' We were getting along admirably, I felt. And then as she turned to the door and I came into full view she continued in quite a different voice, 'Oh! but it's English you are.' And for all the chance there was of continuing the

conversation she might just as well have diagnosed me a full-blown leper.

It was not as if I had been going about Don Juaning and otherwise misconducting myself. For one thing, I dare not. Not in a book that as likely as not my wife might pick up. And besides, of course, I should not want to. The whole point was that I was English. And it makes all the difference. When an Irish girl, for instance, gets into an omnibus she glances round with a large and amiable smile of purest friendliness. But it is not a bit like an English girl's smile. It means nothing at all but a genuine good-fellowship towards all the world. Then as she picks out the stray Englishman that smile fades out. I have noticed it again and again. But I have no moral to deduce from my observations. For I do not go about telling people that I understand women, and I shall never walk about saying how well I understand Ireland.

Even the simple problem of the Irish soldier fighting in the English Army, and with one brother in the Free State forces and another one actively engaged with the Republican troops, beats me. And there have been scores of cases of the sort. There was one pub that I went into where they were talking about the War. America won it, they were saying, and then as my obvious Englishdom and silence obtruded itself upon them, they

tactfully changed the subject. I have not the least doubt that they kept their ridiculous opinions, but thought it rude to voice them before a foreigner. But the talk had produced its effect, and there slowly uncoiled itself from a corner where he had been asleep the gigantic form of the longest and leanest Irishman I ever saw. Sleepy drunk he was (they seem extraordinarily lax in some of these remoter places), and I should say at a guess that he had been mixing large quantities of porter and 'Three Swallows' whisky. (It is presumably so called because with many more swallows the stranger might imagine that summer had come). And once he was awake he seemed a trifle on the quarrelsome side. A cattle-drover he might have been, and, unshaven and unshorn, an awkward customer he looked. And then he took his drover's long stick and began to flourish it round the tap-room. War, he said, was a something something, and all the armies in the world could never drive *him* into fighting. And he truculently flourished his stick at our heads.

I do not know what made me do it. I had never been an officer. But some scrap of the old musketry drill came back to me, and half for fun I snapped out in as officer-like tones as I could manage the 'Shun!' 'Slope hipes', and all the rest of it. And it worked like magic. Staggering drunk, there in the middle of that dirty little bar,

that cattle-man ported and sloped and presented that drover's stick of his with the automatic precision that they might teach a man in, say, the Irish Guards. I am English, amateur army, war-time Territorial enlistment, but I felt proud of having once been ever so small a cog in a machine that could grind its discipline so surely into a man that fifteen years later, drunk or sober, dead or alive, he would come up like a rock to the right words in the right voice. How they ever tamed him I cannot think. But a battalion of men like that must have been one of the world's best fighting machines. 'America won the War' be somethinged for a tale! If there were many men like that in the British armies, then I would say that Ireland won the War—without meaning to. We have an Irish Guards' box in our collection at home, and every time that we get the boys out on Sunday afternoon I think of that particular man.

Which reminds me, by the way, of one of the gravest disappointments that I had from all Ireland. For when twenty-four hours later the Fishguard boat-train slowed down its enormous length by the Paddington platform I had to admit that I had failed in my trust. It is my pleasant habit to bring back to my family little souvenirs of my travels, and for one member they take the form of tin soldiers. So we have Zouaves from

France and Papal Guards from Rome. But in all Ireland I had been unable to buy a box of Free State soldiers. You would have thought that so patriotic a people would have managed a little thing like that.

Ireland, the small boy said in a minute, must then be a very ' dud country indeed '. But I hope that as he grows up he may correct his conceptions. Only as we left the station and I found that porters, bus conductors, and everybody else in London uniformly and scornfully rejected my Irish shillings and coppers, while there seemed no official way at all of exchange into English money, I had to admit that there still existed grave injustices to the Distressful Country !

So I only hope that by this book I may not have added one more Injury to Ireland.

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